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General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) : the relationship between liberal, general and vocational education; with special reference to business studies for 16-19 year olds

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**General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs):  
The Relationship Between Liberal, General and Vocational Education;  
With Specific Reference to Business Studies for 16 - 19 Year Olds.**

**Vikki Smith**

**A thesis submitted to The University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

**April 1997**

**The School of Education  
The University of Huddersfield**

*Literary or scientific, liberal or specialist; all our education is predominantly verbal and therefore fails to accomplish what it is supposed to do. Instead of transforming children into fully developed adults, it turns out students of the natural sciences who are completely unaware of Nature as the primary fact of experience, it inflicts upon the world students of the Humanities who know little or nothing of humanity, their own or anyone else's.*

Aldous Huxley

*Overemphasis on the competitive system and premature specialization on the grounds of immediate usefulness kill the spirit upon which all cultural life depends, specialised knowledge included.*

Albert Einstein

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>AEB</b>	Associated Examining Board
<b>ADV</b>	Advanced Level GNVQ
<b>A Level</b>	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
<b>APL</b>	Accreditation of Prior Learning
<b>AS Level</b>	Advanced Supplementary Level
<b>BTEC</b>	Business & Technology Education Council
<b>CBI</b>	Confederation of British Industry
<b>CGLI</b>	City & Guild of London Institute
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education & Science
<b>DfEE</b>	Department for Education and Employment
<b>DFE</b>	Department for Education
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>FEC</b>	Further Education College
<b>FEFC</b>	Further Education Funding Council
<b>FEDA</b>	Further Education Development Agency
<b>FEU</b>	Further Education Unit
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate of School Education
<b>GCE</b>	General Certificate of Education
<b>GNVQ</b>	General National Vocational Qualification
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HND</b>	Higher National Diploma
<b>HSC</b>	Higher School Certificate
<b>INT</b>	Intermediate Level GNVQ
<b>NCVQ</b>	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
<b>NEAB</b>	Northern Examinations and Assessment Board
<b>NVQ</b>	National Vocational Qualification
<b>OCSEB</b>	Oxford & Cambridge Schools Examinations Board
<b>RSA</b>	Royal Society of Arts
<b>SCAA</b>	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
<b>SCOTVEC</b>	Scottish Vocational Education Council
<b>SEAC</b>	School Examinations & Assessment Council
<b>SSF</b>	School Sixth Forms
<b>SVQ</b>	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
<b>TEC</b>	Training and Education Council
<b>TVEI</b>	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
<b>UCAS</b>	Universities & Colleges Admissions Service
<b>UCLES</b>	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
<b>ULEAC</b>	University of London Examinations and Assessment Council
<b>UODLE</b>	University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education & Training
<b>WJEC</b>	Welsh Joint Education Committee

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## **List of Publications Generated Out of the Research Material**

### **SMITH, V 1997**

GNVQs: An Education or Just a Qualification? *Journal of Post-Compulsory Education*  
Publication Due Summer 1997

### **SMITH, V 1997**

Visiting Speaker: The English Education System and Liberal, General & Vocational Education. Bolton Institute. February 1997

### **SMITH, V 1996**

Visiting Speaker: Liberal, General & Vocational Education: Discrete Paradigms? Bolton Institute. May 1996

### **SMITH, V 1995**

International Conference: Liberal, General & Vocational Education: Discrete Paradigms? *The Vocational Aspect of Education*. July 1995

### **SMITH, V & TIZARD, J 1995**

General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs): The Relationship Between Liberal, General & Vocational Education. *Research in Education*. No. 53. May 1995, pp.89 - 90

### **SMITH, V 1995**

The Transition to GNVQs in Business Studies. *FOCUS on Business Education*. Spring 1995, pp.7 - 9

### **SMITH, V 1994**

The Transition to GNVQs in Business Studies. *EDUCA*. No. 147. November 1994, pp.8 - 9

### **SMITH, V 1994**

GNVQ Business: New Courses, New Issues? *General Educator*. Vol. 30. pp.20 - 23

## ABSTRACT

GNVQs epitomise one strand of contemporary philosophy of education. However, a question that arises is whether GNVQs, having built on the ethos of NVQs, abandon all earlier educational philosophies in favour of the competence movement endorsed in the USA. A question central to this study revolves around whether earlier, alternative philosophies of education also have something of value to offer.

To answer this, traditional approaches to educational provision are identified and explored in terms of their possible 'ideal types'; these ideal types being seen to be represented by *liberal, general and vocational* education. To give such ideal types relevance in modern society they are related to significant educational provision, in this instance educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds. A curriculum criticism of A Levels, BTEC Diplomas, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs is therefore conducted, taking into account the historical development, philosophy, aims, the content and the teaching and learning methods of each approach. To achieve parity of comparison the field of Business Studies was used as an exemplar. The culmination of this stage of the research requires that the findings of the curriculum criticism are mapped against the established ideal types, the purpose being to identify elements that could be said to embody liberal, general and/or vocational education. For example, GNVQs are clearly linked to the vocational, their breadth can also be said to contribute to the general, but are they liberal in any way? The findings indicated that the inclusion of Key Skills and the student centred approach did offer some potential for a liberal education.

To support these findings interviews and an attitudinal survey were conducted. The rationale for this was to explore and reveal the extent to which staff and students concerned with GNVQ Business held the same beliefs as those generated by the desk research; both sets of findings were in concordance. The final stage of the research programme was concerned with the future direction of GNVQs. Interviews were conducted with education policy makers and industry representatives. They were concerned with what the 'ideal' post-16 education programme would entail in the light of perceptions of liberal/vocational/general education. Staff and students were again consulted by way of verification of the conclusions drawn.

The research concludes that liberal education was considered by many as the ideal way forward for post-16 education. GNVQs were seen as predominantly offering general education. From this one could infer that GNVQs are not, therefore, seen as the ideal post-16 programme. However, when 'ideal' elements of post-16 education are discussed some consideration of the world of work was deemed essential (though not a concern of traditional liberal education) and the inclusion of Key Skills were deemed important, as was a student centred approach to learning. In the light of this GNVQs have some potential for meeting the desired/essential components of an ideal post-16 education programme. Greater consideration, however, is required with regard to self-development and social awareness in order to promote liberal aspects of post-16 education. A combination of these factors within a GNVQ programme would represent a marriage of liberal, vocational and, general education philosophies and approaches to education; an 'ideal' post-16 education programme.

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

It is the premise of this discussion that, in ways yet to be demonstrated, there exist tendencies within the broad enterprise of what is known as 'education' that can meaningfully be characterised as 'liberal', 'general' and 'vocational' education.

Disentangling and characterising these tendencies, 'ideal types', and their various historical forms and (perhaps) deformations will provide a theoretical base and a set of criteria regarding educational aims, in the light of which current educational developments may be analysed and evaluated. In particular, the relatively new GNVQ curriculum, with specific reference to Business at Intermediate and more extensively at Advanced Level, will be investigated, in an attempt to assess the extent to which it meets values associated with each of the educational approaches identified above, by characterising the kinds of learning experiences offered by these programmes. Independent of such an assessment, a discussion of the possible nature of a contemporary model of liberal education will be conducted, together with a consideration of its feasibility in the current political and cultural climate.

Evaluations of, and distinctions made by, the writer between curriculum models, in the light of the ideal types identified, will form the basis for empirical enquiry. A review of past and current business related courses, offered to 16-19 year olds, will be conducted. In particular, this will involve the teachers and providers of, and students on, GNVQ Business programmes being invited to reflect upon the nature of their learning experience. A proximate aim will be to explore participants' reactions to, and experiences of, a specific set of curriculum innovations, insofar as these represent an economic 'educational' response to a historical situation construed within a particular framework of socioeconomic interpretation.

The ultimate aim of the study will be to illuminate current orthodoxies and approaches in education, in relation to what are taken to be historically, perhaps universally, significant sets of values and metaphysical beliefs about what is worthwhile in human life and hence what are the proper tasks of education.

### **Background**

A multitude of changes has occurred in the 16 - 19 education system in England and Wales in recent years. Fundamental to these has been the expansion of vocational education and training (VET) (De Ville 1986; NCVQ 1988; Jessup 1989; CBI 1990; Marks 1990; White Paper 1991), in a move towards both a vocationalising of the curriculum and an increase in the number of students attending such courses.

In 1985 the government called for a review (De Ville 1986) of vocational qualifications in England and Wales which led to the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The two focal points of these changes referred to the development of the individual and to the needs of the state (Hodkinson 1991a). It was



considered that both of these areas would benefit from the enhanced development of the skills base which was seen to be at a disadvantage when vocational qualifications were compared to the rest of Europe (CBI 1900; FEU 1984), specifically the German Abitur and the French Baccalaureat systems. Out of this review came National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and the 'competence movement'. At a later stage General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were developed in response to the White Paper Education and Training for the 21st Century. This paper proposed that greater attention be given to the development of vocational qualifications which included the development of a more vocationally orientated alternative to the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level (A Levels) in the form of GNVQs.

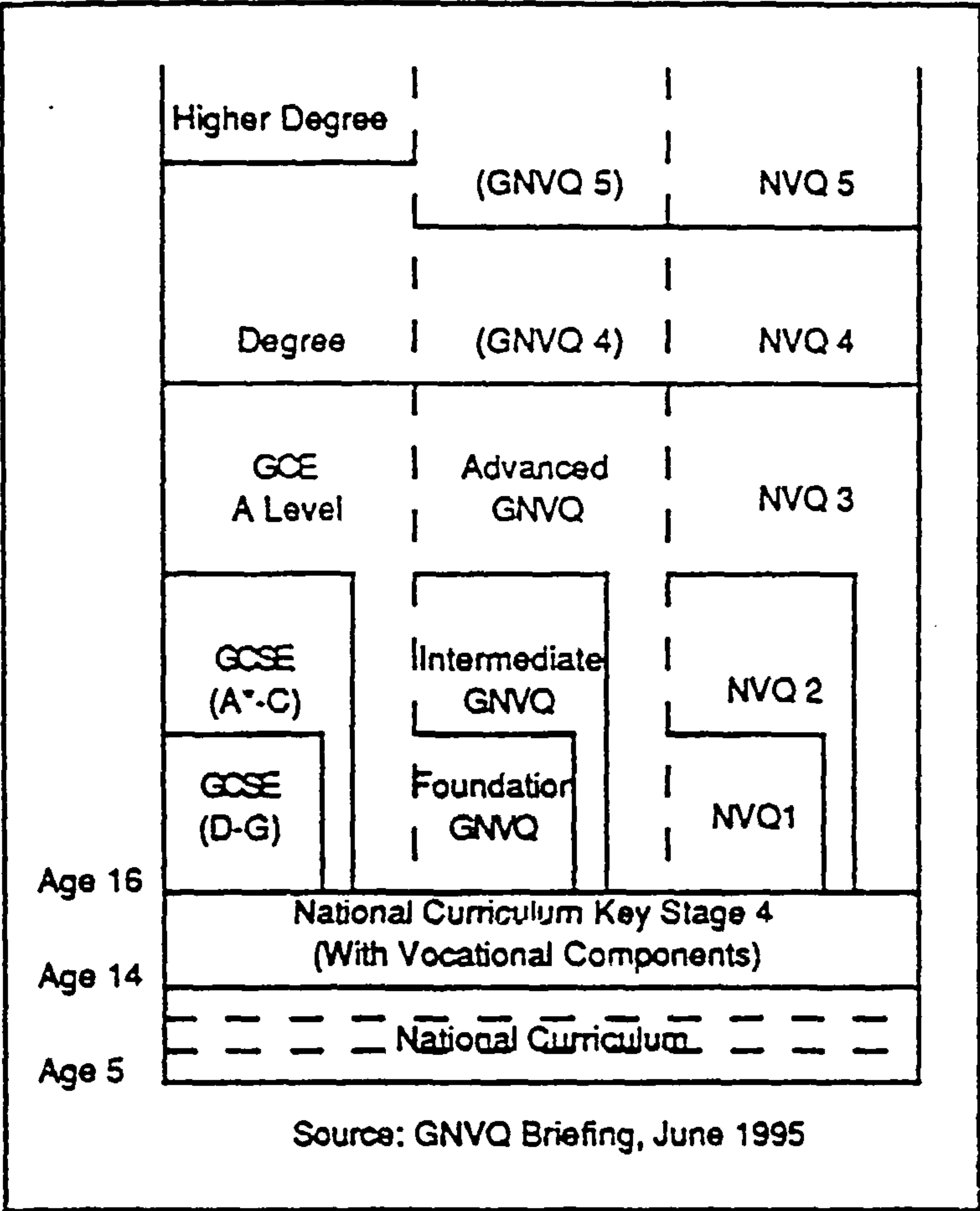
'Competence' is a significant concept in this context. As a curriculum aim it has a long history in the USA (Tuxworth 1989). It was not until the 1980s that it came into vogue in this country and it currently guides much of what is happening in vocational education and training, NVQs being competence-based and GNVQs being derived from these. GNVQs, though not being overtly competence-based, arguably share the same ethos as NVQs in respect to assessment, since GNVQs, like NVQs, are specified in terms of outcomes stated as the Performance Criteria to be achieved. It is this ethos that is, among other things, called into question in this study. Ultimately, problems arise from the fact that *"no agreed definition of the term competence"* (McAlevey and McLeer 1991 p.20) exists, though suggested definitions abound in the education and training literature (FEU 1984; 1986; Jessup 1989; UDACE 1989; Bartram 1990; NCVQ 1987, 1992; Debling 1992; Fennel 1993), causing some confusion. In addition, competence is considered by many to lead to too narrow a focus in education, to the detriment of knowledge and understanding; and concern has been registered with regard to the extent to which competence- and outcome-based systems can offer a broad general educational base (Hyland 1993; Wolf 1993; Smithers 1993). The National Council for Vocational Qualifications' answer to providing breadth in NVQs has been the introduction of Key Skills (previously known as Core Skills). These were considered transferable skills which would enable a broader occupational competence to be attained where adaptability and flexibility in meeting changing demands in an employment setting was the aim. However, the ability of Key Skills alone to attain this said breadth is also questioned (Hyland 1993).

In response to criticisms of lack of breadth in full-time education for 16 - 19 year olds, GNVQs were designed to cover broad vocational areas, developing an appropriate balance of skills, knowledge and understanding generic to that vocational area, building on depth as well as breadth. An example of this is the GNVQ Business, where aspects of finance, marketing, human resources and European Business Studies are included in the broad vocational area along with the group of GNVQ Key Skills (Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology, Information Seeking & Handling, Working with Others and Problem Solving).

Recent reports have detailed areas of concern regarding the current vocational curriculum, including NVQs and GNVQs. Smithers (1993) published a report on vocational qualifications, in conjunction with a national television documentary, which focused on negative aspects of the vocational education system. The focus was

primarily on NVQs, although many of the problems faced in the NVQ system were also attributed to GNVQs. The Dearing Review (1993), which proposed changes throughout the whole educational system, suggested that vocational qualifications be introduced to students at an earlier age, ie: in schools as well as further education colleges and school sixth forms. More recently Davies (1994), of The Staff College, Bristol, has compared GNVQs with A Levels. The results in this study suggested that GNVQs were not as popular as the A Level route, even though the Advanced Level GNVQ is said to be equivalent to two A Levels and of equal rigour (see Fig. 1).

Fig.1: The National Qualification Framework



Due to comparisons such as those provided in Fig.1, the Advanced Level GNVQ became tagged as the 'vocational A Level' and more recently the 'applied A Level'. The Advanced Level GNVQ and A Levels have come to represent once again the so called academic/vocational divide. Factors to which the fostering and maintenance of this divide can be attributed include attitudes to and perceptions of academic education, which regard A Levels as the 'gold standard' in British post-16 education. Sir Bryan Nicholson in the CBI Task Force Report 'Towards a Skills Revolution' (1990) summarises this:

*"Despite many attempts at reform we still have an education system which is biased towards the academic at the expense of the practical".*  
(Foreword)



This bias is further enhanced by the connection of academic qualifications to, and the continuing presence in educational culture of, liberal education which has never really disappeared since Plato, in *The Republic*, promoted the idea of the education of individuals to fulfil their role in society and contribute to the greater good of the community as a whole.

The Greek notion of a liberal education, espoused by Plato, has formed the basis for much of the philosophical development of liberal education. The desired outcome of education, for Plato, was a just society where the enhancement of character as well as intelligence was to be achieved. Individual personal development was not the main concern of his model but rather a by-product of a just society. Education and individual daily existence focused on the state; social and political aspects overshadowed other forms of education. The transmission of truths previously discovered and regarded as established and the bringing about of behaviour which was in accordance with strict moral principles and codes were central to Plato's idea of education. Virtues such as being courageous, kind, loyal and cooperative were seen as vital to both personal and state well being. Platonic themes such as these have been continually rehearsed since their conception though with significantly different variations and emphases. There has generally been latent in them an implied association between 'true' education and the education of a social and cultural elite through a curriculum that is predominantly theoretical in nature.

Aristotle endorsed a similar approach to education to Plato. Reflection on morality and politics was encouraged; as were such aspects as the arts of literature and music; the individual's role in society was recognised but individualism was seen as more important than the state. The value of intellectual development and the study of intellectual disciplines were seen as worthwhile in their own right and not just for the moral improvement that may be achieved. Individual intellectual development was seen as an end in itself and not necessarily measured in terms of what contributions could be brought to society and the state.

This classical conception of a liberal education - where a meaningful education is deemed that which is considered good to know in and for itself - has never totally disappeared. Newman strove for a rounded education where narrow specialisation was avoided. In the Aristotelian tradition he stressed the importance of the development of the ability to see all things in relation to each other, along with the study of what is considered the best of what has been said and thought (Honderich 1995). A major preoccupation of Hirst (1976), since the 1970s, has been the nature of liberal education for contemporary society. His theories on developing rationality were influenced by Aristotle. Rationality, reasoning and logic could be found in various 'forms of knowledge'. Mathematics, history, philosophy, literature and the arts, moral knowledge, religion, physics and biology were seen to provide their own sets of concepts and tests for truth. It was acquiring these forms of knowledge and developing a rational mind capable of sound reasoning and logical thought that was seen as the principal benefit - a rigorous intellectual education for its own sake.

Rothblatt (1976), in a historical study of the concept, however, introduces a sociological

dimension to such theories and suggests that, as implied above, a liberal education automatically presupposed a particular social condition and was suited to a 'freeman'; as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake could be suitable only for a leisured elite. Thus it was closely connected with the aristocracy and the upper classes and aspired to by the middle classes in 'gentrifying' themselves. While conceding some universal validity to the idea Rothblatt goes on to argue that:

*"a liberal education is of particular concern to technological societies because as specialism proceeds, liberal education seems to dispute the advance and even fall victim to it"*  
(Rothblatt 1976 p.9)

Such issues are pertinent here. If A Levels and academic study were equated to liberal education the growth and promotion of vocational qualifications such as GNVQs could be seen to contribute to the downfall of such approaches. Questions that arise revolve around the following issues:

- \* whether the two approaches have to be mutually exclusive
- \* whether only A Levels can be considered as a liberal education even though both approaches attempt to at least go part way to helping individuals continue their personal and social development
- \* whether the assumption that A Levels represent a modern version of a liberal education is a sound one.

In any event it is arguable that all forms of education should encourage and stimulate breadth of mind and develop a critical awareness of social, political, cultural and economic factors operating in our society. Insofar as they do, individuals, regardless of which mode of education they have been a recipient, would be able to operate effectively in the current climate of social and economic change (issues that will be discussed in greater detail throughout the study).

In an attempt to answer such questions as those posed above this study will evaluate GNVQs against such criteria by a review of social, political, cultural and economic factors. Other forms of 16 - 19 educational provision (A Levels, Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC), Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and NVQs) will also be subject to the same type of evaluation. Concurrent investigations will involve characterising liberal education, general education and vocational education as ideal types (Weber 1949), to which end the curricular models of A Levels, BTEC, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs will be used as exemplars in an attempt to illuminate liberal, vocational and general tendencies. A fundamental concern of this enquiry will be an attempt to establish the nature of the relationship between the liberal, the vocational and the general, as well as a firm understanding of the significance of these categories. Additionally, and most importantly, such conceptual distinctions will be used to identify the nature and evaluate the worth of current curricular approaches.

GNVQs, as one of the most recent developments in post-16 vocational education alongside NVQs, represent a response to the perceived imbalance in British education whereby vocational and academic subjects have not historically enjoyed parity of esteem. GNVQs, seen as the vocational or applied A Level, aim to transcend the



academic/vocational divide, but have come under considerable criticism. To investigate the validity of this criticism GNVQs will be compared with other curriculum models via 'ideal-type' (Weber 1949) analysis and 'curriculum criticism' (Mann 1969). The information gained in the curriculum criticism will be used to evaluate each of the curricular models on the assumption that liberal education can be meaningfully distinguished from general education. Explorations of a relevant and valid approach to a liberal education will ensue and alternative models will be suggested.

### **Aims of the Study**

The focus of this study, in the main, is on the education offered to 16 - 19 year olds through GNVQ programmes. They represent the most recent development in British vocational education. Having been labelled the vocational and the applied A-level, GNVQs have been seen as an attempt to transcend the academic/vocational divide. If they are able to bridge such a divide they have the potential to become the most advanced development of, and the most progressive form of, vocational education in Britain. If they can offer breadth within a broad vocational area GNVQs are avoiding premature specialisation; a point which can be said to have much in common with the philosophy of general education (here taken to be distinct, as will be shown, from liberal education). By ensuring the students continue to study Key Skills (Communication; Information Technology; and Application of Number; as well as Improving own Learning; Working with Others and Problem Solving) they can be said to provide individuals with transferable skills that are of benefit in both social and economic settings; another issue that relates to aspects of general education and to the wider societal concerns of liberal education. Factors such as these serve to illustrate that GNVQs could be a serious attempt to offer breadth in education, incorporating characteristics of general and vocational education. The question remains as to whether GNVQs, as progressive vocationalism, can be said to offer any form of liberal education. Explorations of how well GNVQs encompass key traits of each of the education paradigms will be undertaken. Consideration will be given to the social, political, economic and cultural issues and those which influenced the introduction of GNVQs. Liberal education will be re-examined in a modern context which will take into account the vocational, performance- and outcome-based systems and such elements as Key Skills and competences which are an integral part of GNVQs.

Thus, as a starting point for this enquiry, the question of whether a truly liberal education is meaningful, relevant or feasible in a contemporary society will be addressed. The evaluation embraces a discussion of the values of a liberal education, involving an exploration of the many subtle interpenetrations of history, society and education involved in generating this construct. This will include a social and cultural critique of implied and expressed values which takes account of contemporary thinking about education; and it will require some conceptual clarification of the concepts of liberal, general and vocational education.

Following on from this, through field work, the opinions of policy makers, advisors and industry representatives regarding the extent to which a liberal education is present in GNVQs and whether such aspects are appropriate for post-16 education will be



investigated; where possible teasing out liberal education tendencies in GNVQ provision. These findings will then be put to staff and students concerned with GNVQ provision in an attempt to test the reliability and feasibility of such opinions against the grass roots reality. This will bring to the fore the nature of GNVQ provision and the issue of breadth addressed by GNVQs through their broad vocational area and Key Skills. Are they able to offer the breadth, arguably desirable for contemporary life, by offering a broader range of skills, a variety of teaching and learning strategies, a greater understanding of the learning process and access to different working environments (FEU 1992) is it feasible that they do, or could, correspond to criteria set by liberal education? With respect to offering breadth in education the inclusion of Key Skills in GNVQs but not in A Levels will form a particular focus of the discussion. The question of how well GNVQs as a whole fulfil the objectives of a liberal education will be explored. Ultimately, specific qualities that are desired in post-16 education, by educationalists, industry representatives, staff and students on GNVQ courses will be identified and appraised in relation to the ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education.

Juxtaposed to this GNVQs will also be evaluated in terms of what they have achieved, what they proposed to achieve and what the NCVQ and other education policy makers and advisors consider has been achieved. To address this the findings of interviews carried out with staff and students undertaking GNVQ courses and the results of a survey questionnaire will be drawn upon, as will interviews with education policy makers and advisors from industry that were conducted in the light of the initial research findings. The findings of the interviews with educationalists and industry representatives also address attitudes to liberal education, vocational education and general education. By way of substantiating these results final interviews with staff and students concerned with Advanced Level GNVQ Business will be implemented, the results of which will be utilised to check the validity of the conclusions drawn.

The specific aims of this study, which attempt to address the above issues, are:-

- \* to locate GNVQs within a pattern of curriculum 'ideal-types' developed from an evaluation of the 16 - 19 curriculum and from educational theory more broadly, conducting an investigative search into the aims, philosophical underpinnings and characteristics of each curriculum 'ideal-type'
- \* to examine the extent to which a liberal education is desirable or feasible for the current climate, in view of the increasing importance being placed on progressive vocational qualifications such as GNVQs
- \* using the field of Business Studies as an exemplar to explore the nature of GNVQ course provision in school sixth forms and further education colleges, with regard to the fact that further education colleges have greater experience of vocational courses whereas school sixth forms are conducting GNVQs in a climate conditioned by A Levels
- \* to assess whether outcome-based systems, such as that offered by GNVQs, can provide a liberal education.

## **CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The aims of the study, as enumerated in the previous chapter, are concerned with identifying perceptions, and indeed viable models, of liberal, general and vocational education (for the purpose of this study, referred to as 'ideal types') and with the status of GNVQs in the light of such perceptions.

Historical perspectives will be utilised to shed light on the contemporary situation, bringing into the discussion issues surrounding GNVQs. Investigations concerned with the values attached to varying approaches to education, here identified as 'ideal types', and a classification of their aims will follow. Specific models of past and present educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds will be compared and contrasted with each other and related, where possible, to the identified ideal types via the medium of a curriculum criticism.

A series of interviews will be conducted with national educational policy makers, representatives from industry with an interest in business education and training, those implementing GNVQ programmes in further education colleges and school sixth forms, and students following GNVQ Business courses. The rationale for these interviews is to check the theory against the reality with regard to the perceived importance placed on the values and aims of given approaches to education, placing each into a contemporary setting.

Research undertaken in this study will involve the following stages:-

- (i) ideal type analysis of liberal, general and vocational education.
- (ii) curriculum criticism of five programmes of study
- (iii) initial exploratory interviews with staff and GNVQ students (1)
- (iv) survey questionnaire of staff and GNVQ students
- (v) in-depth interviews with educationalists and representatives from industry
- (vi) further in-depth interviews with staff and GNVQ students (2)
- (vii) an analysis of the concept of a 'liberal education' in a modern context taking into account GNVQs.

A literature review into the concept of ideal types was undertaken and followed by a critique to assess its value to the research project. Once its relevance is confirmed the ideal types of liberal, general, and vocational education will be established. This will be followed by an analysis of those programmes of study that have played a large role in post - 16 education (A Levels, BTEC, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs) which are subject to a curriculum criticism. The initial analysis considers the general attributes of each of the programmes of study with further focus on Business Study provision; the philosophy, aims, content, teaching and learning methods and intended outcomes of each approach are questioned. The profiles of Business Studies provision are then mapped against the established ideal types of liberal, general, and vocational education.



The initial stages of the field research will focus on GNVQs in an attempt to highlight areas of interest that are considered appropriate for further study. As the field research develops it will concentrate on what is commonly thought of as liberal education, general education and vocational education and the role of GNVQs in the light of such perceptions. This analysis will be conducted in an attempt to identify a modern view of liberal education taking into account recent educational developments, specifically that of the introduction of GNVQs.

Data collection in this study will involve both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the aim being to strike a balance between the inductive - deductive and positivistic - interpretive (exploratory research generating theoretical ideas and the subsequent testing of the generated hypothesis). Within this framework controlled and systematic empirical research techniques will be used. The use of a triangulation or 'multi-method' strategy (Brannen 1992) will be implemented which has advantages such as increased reliability since the phenomena in question are analysed using a number of different research methods (Yin 1991). For example: the sheer number of respondents involved in the study adds credibility to the views expressed. These will be checked against the information drawn from the ideal type analysis and curriculum criticism, thus ensuring that subjective belief is checked against objective reality. Where a case does not fit the facts either the explanation or the phenomenon will be redefined (Brannen 1992). This is seen as a "... *rigorous process that leads to strong evidence that the hypothesis, as finally reformulated, is generalizable.*" (Borg and Gall 1989 p.404). To this end the study is not formed out of a "*nexus of purely conceptual thought, but is created, modified and sharpened through empirical analysis of the concrete problem*" (Giddens 1971 p.141) which in turn increases the precision of the analysis.

## **Theoretical Basis**

### **Introduction**

This study is based on reasoning which follows the inductive - deductive approach, balanced against a positivistic - interpretive orientation; whereby research findings are used to generate ideas/areas worthy of further investigation and these are then transformed into data sets which are also used to generate further ideas. Initially this involved interviews with a number of individuals and institutions and then an attitudinal survey. The interviews adopted an interpretive orientation in that their aim was to construe significance and meaning from a profusion of responses. This was done in order that the issues of importance regarding GNVQs and education of 16 - 19 year olds could be examined to identify concepts and theories that are relevant to the study. The attitudinal survey logically followed these findings in an attempt to elucidate and confirm the results. Out of these interviews and the attitudinal survey a hypothesis was developed and made generalizable; interpretation and inductive reasoning based on these observations formed the basis for the next stage of the research.

The hypothesis, generated out of the interviews and survey findings, became the first premise for deductive reasoning; the purpose of which was to check the validity of the hypothesis and its implications. For example: can it convincingly be said that 'a liberal

education, as opposed to a general education, is paramount for enhancing an individual's quality of life', when a second premise arises which suggests that 'GNVQs offer a general education first, with possible liberal overtones'? The conclusions drawn from these findings complete the first stage of deductive reasoning, the outcome of which could be that 'GNVQs are not the ideal way forward for individual and national success in the future if liberal education is the key'.

Another facet to this stage of the inquiry required a positivistic orientation - that the attitudinal survey results be compared to theory. For example: was the popular opinion of what constituted a liberal education and/or a general education equal to the philosophy of education? Were the results compatible with accepted knowledge?

The next stage of the investigation further tested the hypothesis. The educational paradigm (liberal, general or vocational) that had been deemed necessary in the research results, for individual and national economic success in the future, was questioned. This involved thorough evaluation of historical ideas with regard to the three educational paradigms and a further series of in-depth interviews with educationalists, industry representatives and staff and students concerned with GNVQ Business. The research findings along with the desk research were compared and contrasted. The validity of the resulting empirical data and the subsequent hypothesis were further tested from a standpoint of compatibility and accepted knowledge.

### **Multi-Method Approach**

As described above, both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been implemented in this study. The rationale for this becomes evident when the benefits of each approach are considered on their own merit.

### **The Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews, requires the researcher to interpret the results generated. It is enquiry from the inside and can provide background information on the phenomenon in question and act as a source of hypotheses. The aim is to develop, test and verify the hypothesis, allowing it to become generalizable through abstracting relevant data from the research findings in an attempt to offer causal explanations. Its strength is that it seeks to understand the perspectives of the people and institutions studied, on the grounds that it is essential to do so if the phenomenon is to be described and explained effectively. Elucidation of perspectives and processes is the aim in an attempt to generate theory and/or hypotheses. It allows events and social processes to be evaluated that would not easily be measured by the implementation of a questionnaire. For example, the interviewer is able to pursue lines of inquiry should they develop and gain greater clarification of points than if implementing a questionnaire. A criticism of this approach is that there can be a reluctance, on the part of the researcher, to inject theory into the interpretation of the research findings, bringing the charge that qualitative research can be atheoretical. Brannen (1992) suggests that this is due to the fact that there can be a tendency to stick closely to the constructs of the respondent and a reliance on interpretive devices.



## **The Quantitative Approach**

The quantitative approach, or positivistic approach, to research largely aims to characterise relationships between variables, incidence and frequency. It is research from the outside. Quantitative approaches can be used to check exploratory findings from qualitative research and enhance the validity of the results and conclusions drawn, allowing the findings to be made generalizable. It allows the theories or hypothesis that have been developed to be tested. Quantitative approaches, such as the implementation of a postal survey/questionnaire, can reach large scale audiences and typify structural features of social life. Questionnaire's are also the ideal research tool where issues for investigation are clearly defined and the required responses are unambiguous. They can, however, be less flexible than a qualitative approach and be weak at exploring reasons for the findings, weak at giving causal explanations for how or why a relationship exists between variables. A further criticism is that they can also become data-driven to the exclusion of theory (Robson 1995).

## **Triangulation**

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research have their strengths and their weaknesses. Sole reliance on one of these approaches may distort the picture and lead to questionable findings. However, if the findings of one method are checked against the other, there will be greater confidence in the validity of the findings. For example: if exploratory interviews form the basis for further investigation via a questionnaire and the two results correspond then there will be greater confidence in those results than if one method alone had been implemented. Validity, out of the consistency in the findings, will be increased and the hypothesis given additional plausibility.

By making use of both qualitative and quantitative data Cohen & Manion (1980) suggest that it allows the researcher to:

*"map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexities of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint"*  
Cohen & Manion (1980) p.208

This is seen as 'triangulation' as developed by Denzin (1970): the combination of two or more methods of investigation and more than one type of data (Bryman 1988 p.131). Relevant triangulation approaches for this study include:

### **1 COMBINED LEVELS OF TRIANGULATION**

Three levels of analysis are implemented, namely the individual level, the interactive level (such as groups) and the level of collectives (such as organisational). This particular type of triangulation is relevant here as those involved in the study represent all of the identified levels. For example: at two different stages one-to-one interviews have been conducted with staff from school sixth forms and further education colleges, as have small group interviews with students from both these types of establishments. In addition, interviews have also been carried out with individuals concerned with educational policy at national level and with industrialists with national responsibility for training.

## 2 THEORETICAL TRIANGULATION

Alternative and competing theories are explored in preference to utilising a single viewpoint. This is particularly true of the desk based research and the realm of ideal types. Ideal types are in themselves contentious. Competing arguments and viewpoints have been included in the investigation. In setting up the ideal types of liberal education, general education and vocational education alternative and competing perspectives have again been taken into consideration. This area is further tested when the research findings from the last series of interviews with educationalists, industry representatives and staff and students are compared to the established and accepted knowledge.

## 3 METHODOLOGICAL TRIANGULATION

Methodological triangulation involves using either the same research methods on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study. Normative or interpretive techniques may be utilised, singularly or in combination. For the purpose of this study both approaches have been utilised. For example: firstly, the initial exploratory interviews were followed by the implementation of a self-completion questionnaire. The findings sought by both methods were the same, the reason for using both tools being to check and clarify the findings of one against the other - a qualitative narrative account enhanced by supportive statistical analysis. Secondly, the final series of interviews, which started with educationalists and industry representatives, was followed by further confirmatory interviews with staff and students in school sixth forms and further education colleges. Thirdly, all the field research was checked against relevant literature - historical data being used to shed light on contemporary situations.

Having justified and explained the use of triangulation, or a multiple methods approach to the research problem, its value to the project requires confirmation. Cohen & Manion (1980) suggest that *"triangulation techniques are suitable when a more holistic view of educational outcomes is sought"* (p.214) and that *"multiple methods are suitable where a controversial aspect of education needs to be evaluated more fully"* (p.215). Research requires that the total environment concerned with the research problem be investigated in an attempt to generate accurate and valid results. Educational change, like any change, is controversial. Criticism and a period of almost continuous change have occurred in the vocational education sector in recent years, all of which need to be taken into account if a full and realistic picture is to emerge. In doing so a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation may be revealed; contradictions may become visible enabling a more profound interpretation of the findings to take place; it may break the 'hierarchy of credibility', *"which limits our understanding, by giving equal status to people from different ranks. 'Hierarchy of credibility' means that individual of a higher social rank are more credible (reliable) than individuals of a lower rank: the teacher is more reliable than the pupil..... and so on."* (Altricher et al. 1993 p.117).

At all stages the purpose of triangulation is the *"reduction of inappropriate certainty"* (Robson 1995 p.290). The use of a single method can produce clear-cut results and premature answers to the research problem. The use of alternative, additional methods may point to different results therein removing what Robson terms *"specious certainty"*.



Whether discrepancies or confirmation occur the results benefit from a more accurate set of data and the interpretation of the findings is enhanced. Increased validity and credibility of findings is generated along with confidence in the resulting conclusions.

## **Selection of Methodology**

### **Desk Based Research**

Cohen & Manion (1980) talk about *historical research* when taking into account relevant literature and suggest that it should be included in all studies and perhaps even the first stage of a research project. The desk research implemented within this study was concerned with gaining a good understanding of what was known, or established, about the relevant discipline areas. For example: current thought regarding the development of liberal education, general education and vocational education, the concern being to conceptualise theoretical and methodological aspects of the study.

A literature review concerned with an investigation into background information, taking into account what was currently available, was undertaken in order to find out what was known about the topics in question, what was seen as problematic and what had previously been undertaken to redress such problems (Smithers 1993, DES 1991, The Dearing Review 1993, Hodgkinson 1989, 1990, 1992a&b, Hyland 1993, 1994a&b, Wolf 1990, 1993). This review of relevant literature was conducted so that further analysis of the existing data could be implemented, with a view to presenting *"interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or different from those presented in the first report"* (Hakim 1982 p.1 in Robson 1995 p.282). A conscious effort was made to utilise this data for means of analysis and interpretation, but to be not constrained or imprisoned by them to the exclusion of all else. In doing so knowledge was enhanced whereby available literature was evaluated in terms of its worth to the study and used to place the work in a wider context. The aim was to minimise bias and distortion in the quest for objectivity and to describe all aspects of the study in the search for 'truth' (Cohen & Manion 1980 p.31).

Methods such as these have allowed the formulation of an hypothesis to take place, followed by the collection, validation and analysis of relevant data to test the hypothesis. Cohen & Manion (1980) suggest that *"this sequence leads to a new understanding of the past and its relation to the present and future"*, that such a revaluation of data *"throws light on present and future trends"* (p.32). The investigation of theories, methods and practices was then used to evaluate newer, emerging ones. For example: the ideal type analysis allowed the philosophy and development of education to be evaluated in historical terms; the curriculum criticism allowed the different forms of 16 - 19 provision to be compared and contrasted; the focus on GNVQs then allowed newer, emerging approaches to education to be evaluated in the light of past developments.

### **In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interviews throughout this study were all in-depth, semi-structured and face-to-face in their approach. With the exception of the student interviews, which were conducted

with groups of three respondents, the interviews were on a one-to-one basis. They were conducted in such a manner, rather than structured interviews, for the following reasons.

Bryman (1992) suggests:

*"The semi- or unstructured interview is a tool that is employed to elicit the interviewee's categories and interpretation of phenomena that he or she regards as significant. It is a style of interviewing that is more than the sum of the parts, that is, it is more than a collection of open-ended questions and the answers thereto".*

Bryman in Brannen (1992) p.72

Advantages of implementing semi-structured interviews include the fact that they enable the researcher to evaluate and define general concepts searching for patterns of inter-relationships between those concepts. Under such situations the semi-structured interview is able to tackle less obvious issues and explore complex issues and responses as semi-structured interviews are less formal than the structured approach which can be seen as artificial. Conversely, the semi-structured approach is considered more natural and closer to natural conversation. This allows the parties concerned to become more relaxed with the situation and to develop a rapport with one another. Having achieved such an environment it becomes easier to elicit information about the phenomenon in question and generate more detailed, comprehensive and realistic information from the interviewee.

Implementing a semi-structured approach, over the structured interview, can also mean that unanticipated responses are elicited, the results of which may cast doubt on previous findings.

*"Open-ended situations can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of-relationships or hypotheses".*

(Cohen & Manion 1980 p.247)

The researcher, under such an approach, can further probe and explore these issues as and when they arise through the course of the interview, adding to the richness of the material. In addition, the sequence of the questions, their wording and the amount of attention paid to each one can be modified to best suit the interview situation and the interviewee. Questions can be added to follow up an interesting or important issue, or they can be omitted should it be deemed appropriate. These questions are open-ended and are seen as being able to help in the interpretation and understanding of broad survey findings (Bryman 1992 p.73). Such a flexible approach allows the researcher to examine areas of interest, to clarify misunderstandings (on either part) and therein gain greater depth to the findings and achieve a true reflection of what the respondents really believe.

The aim of interviews in this study was to elucidate the significant factors in the development of 16 - 19 education provision and its vocational orientation. All the interviews were recorded with the respondents' permission and later transcribed. The initial interviews were a precursor to designing the attitudinal survey/self-administered



questionnaire. In the final series of interviews data was used to substantiate or reject a previously formulated hypothesis and to validate other research findings. Testing the findings against the hypothesis also allowed issues of bias and subjectivity to be addressed and increased the validity of the conclusion drawn.

Attention must be drawn to possible problems of this approach specifically when dealing with the small groups. Student interviews were conducted in groups of three, in a non-threatening environment such as the refectory or student common room. It was recognised that the views and responses of specific individuals would be hard to follow and that the group dynamics could affect individual contributions. The rationale for implementing these small group interviews appeared to outweigh these issues; having explained what the interviews were about and their purpose the contention was that the students would feel more relaxed and with the support of their peers they would feel less intimidated than if they were alone. This would encourage them to raise issues that they believed to be important and ask questions in return, again to help them feel relaxed with the situation. In the event of the group dynamics becoming a problem it was envisaged that monitoring the participants' body language would enable the researcher to evaluate how comfortable individuals were with the situation and try to put them further at their ease and finally explore issues with the whole group. In this situation the researcher took on a more obvious role in that the control of the progress of the interview was firmly with the interviewer, giving direction to the students as required.

### **Self-Administered Questionnaires**

Views originally formulated in the context of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews were the basis for the quantitative research whereby the interview findings formed the basis for the areas to be further questioned and developed in the questionnaires. The intention was to confirm and add greater validity to the initial interview findings. To achieve this the questionnaires were designed as an attitudinal survey where the respondents were asked to gauge their responses to given statements. For example, respondents were asked to register their responses to given statements; the response rates followed a five option Likert scale ranging from strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree with a neutral response variable. The questionnaires were self-completion in style and a postal survey was implemented.

Problems that were recognised with this type of research included the point that the information generated out of such questionnaires can be superficial and that there was little opportunity to check the honesty or seriousness of responses. Additionally, the responses, by the very nature of a questionnaire, had to be limited to ticking predetermined boxes giving no opportunity to probe and explore issues due to the closed nature of the questions. Taking these points into account the questionnaires were designed, using the interview findings as a basis. The questionnaires were then piloted to test for ambiguity, clarity and workability. Where problems of misunderstandings were encountered the questions were rephrased and then tested once more. In doing so clear, unambiguous questionnaires were developed from which meaningful results could be drawn.

The questionnaires were designed to measure attitudes to, and perceptions, of certain issues. The fact that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions was clearly explained at the start of the questionnaire, reiterating that the respondents had nothing to fear about 'choosing the correct response'. This issue of confidentiality of individuals and institutions was also confirmed at the outset.

In order to provide standardisation in the results specific, as opposed to general, questions were posed. Closed questions, rather than open-ended questions, were implemented throughout the questionnaires. A Likert scale was utilised for the majority of the questions where an attitude to, or perspective on, a certain issue was required. This scale ranged from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, with a 'no-opinion' option in the form of the response 'Don't Know'. The respondents were asked to tick the box which most accurately reflected their response to a given statement.

The Likert scale was implemented for three principal reasons: it is widely used, and therefore tested, in the use of attitude measurement; it is relatively easy to develop; and importantly, it looks interesting to respondents and Robson (1995 p.256) suggests that people often enjoy completing a scale of this kind, a crucial factor in questionnaire responses levels. Time was at a premium for all respondents and motivation to complete the questionnaire might be low. So, if the respondents' interest could be captured they were more likely to complete the questionnaire, giving considered rather than perfunctory responses.

The questions themselves followed a logical format, with questions grouped into one of several categories. Towards the end of a category the questions were designed in such a way as to form a natural link to the following section in order to encourage continuity of thought and response.

## **Research Areas**

### **Ideal Type Analysis**

A focus of Weber's work was to interpret 'meaning', in that humans, as conscious beings, attach sense or meaning to their actions. Weber (1949) was of the belief that understanding, empathy, or intuition were crucial when striving to describe or explain a social phenomenon. Through the interpretation of 'meaning' and the subsequent understanding of the social phenomenon the concept of an 'ideal type' was developed. The rationale for implementing an ideal type analysis (Weber 1949) is that, in line with the interpretation of meaning, its development can aid in both description, understanding and explanation and provide an organisation of intelligible relations within a sequence of events (Aron 1972).

Initially this involved an investigation into the concept of liberal education which has been seen to be in opposition to any form of education which has a utilitarian basis (as in GNVQs) and which has also been equated to socially prestigious forms of academic education. A consideration of Plato's idea of the role of education working for the greater good of the whole of society was a starting point for this analysis. The work of Aristotle,



who built on many of Plato's concepts, was also reviewed. These two theories formed the basis for outlining what has historically been considered a liberal education. The development of the concept of liberal education was illustrated in an evaluation of the work of Newman, Peters, Hirst, Rothblatt, Pring, and Silver & Brennan, amongst others. This conceptualised liberal education in a more contemporary setting, highlighting the fact that differing concepts of a liberal education have occurred in different times since Plato's *Republic*. In taking into account these different models, whereby concepts of a liberal education have changed to meet the demands of the age, the study also addressed the question of whether a liberal education can be seen as relevant today.

Such a review of the development of liberal education brought into the discussion alternative interpretations of a liberal education. Dewey's (1914) work on education tried to address the increasingly omnipresent distinction made between training and education; a strong theme of this study in terms of how vocational education and vocational training are viewed. He concentrated on what could be considered a meaningful education, in terms of how life ought to be lived, and encompasses social (including moral) and political features (inculcating certain ideas established in the work of Plato and Aristotle); but Dewey held the belief that to be truly meaningful discovery and experience were central, that the solving of problems through social experience was pivotal. In a discovery and experience based approach to education Dewey argued that what is studied then becomes integral to an individual's character. From this they learn to decipher what is considered suitable conduct. This science-based, pragmatic approach differs from the traditional liberal curriculum which focuses on history and the classics and centres on problems, practices and the values that experience can bring to learning; factors that will be shown to have much in common with a general education and a vocational education as well as having connections with liberal education. Adopting a stance such as suggested by Dewey, one that includes aspects of the liberal, the general and the vocational may resolve some of the tensions arising between the different ideal types by bridging the gap between them and offering some suggestion as to how general education can be liberalised.

Further developments in education will be discussed in an attempt to appraise the whole picture of how present day provision evolved. This will encompass an examination of how a liberal education, for the leisured classes and the aristocracy, was seen in comparison to the education and training of the artisan and will be extended further to compare provision of education for all, bringing into the discussion the concerns which revolve around 'general education' provision. This historical perspective will bring into the discussion, among other things, the role of the Mechanics Institutes, Sir Lyon Playfair's Introductory Lecture to the Government in 1852, The Percy Report (1945) and, more recently, the White Paper of 1991 entitled 'Education and Training for the 21st Century'.

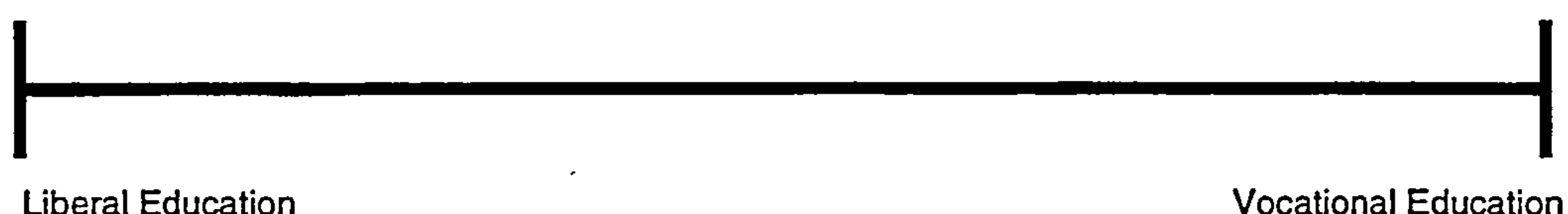
The development of education throughout 19th and 20th century England will be reviewed in terms of the influence and continuing presence of ideas of a liberal education. This will embrace the notion that liberal education has various guises, that it can be a dynamic process, changing to meet contemporary demands. This discussion will embrace the role of such elements as 'human development' and 'self realisation', will

examine the emergence of different sets of values in the continuing process of change and will consider whether the 19th century and other earlier ideologies of liberal education have relevance for today's society - indeed, whether the concept still retains force and significance and has not simply been unmasked as purveying a form of social and cultural elitism. The extent to which a liberal education as seen in the 19th century is deemed appropriate today will be considered. This will take into consideration the view that some sort of social superiority was inherent in liberal education in the 18th and 19th centuries (Rothblatt 1976 p.24).

The refinement of issues surrounding and pertaining to a liberal education will bring to the fore, among others, the issue of breadth and issues concerned with ensuring that a broader perspective to life is provided. Both aspects, ie: the liberal education and breadth in education, will be compared and contrasted in today's social, cultural and educational environment. In addition the question of whether competence- and outcome-based educational provision, such as GNVQs, can ever be considered as any form of liberal education will be discussed, exploring the issue of breadth in the curriculum along with aspects associated with general education provision. Such discussions will allow liberal education to be contextualised in the 16 - 19 curriculum in today's education system.

A result of this exercise will be to establish and specifically delineate the concepts of liberal, general and vocational education for the purpose of this study (Giddens 1971). The emergence of these particular ideal types as relevant ones reflects not only the issues outlined above, but the following considerations: liberal and vocational education are frequently contrasted and set apart as two very distinct spheres of education (Pring 1993; Lewis 1994; Williams 1994) creating a continuum which places vocational education and liberal education at opposite ends of a spectrum (see Fig. 2).

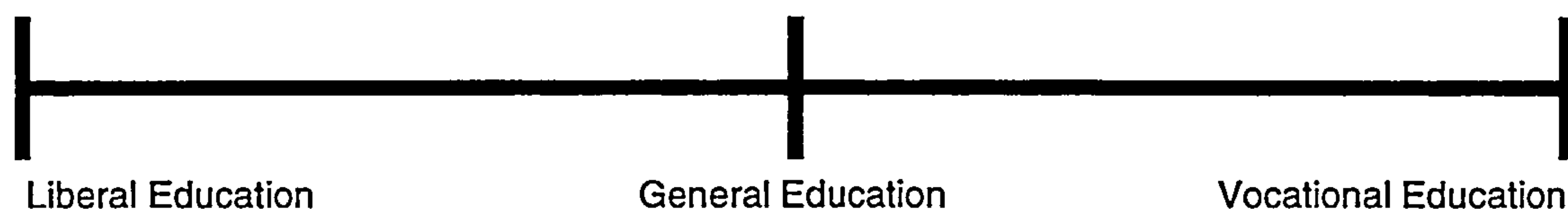
*Fig. 2 The Liberal and Vocational Education Spectrum*



Vocational education is defined as "*education for an instrumental purpose*" and liberal education as, among other things, "*knowledge for its own sake*", thus setting the two apart and illustrating the divide in liberal and vocational education in England and Wales. Additionally, however, general education is a commonly used term and confusion arises since the terms liberal education and general education are sometimes used interchangeably. Yet, arguably, liberal and general education are individual and distinct approaches to education (Erickson 1992). This is a stance adopted by Johnson & Moen (1980) who state that "*liberal and general education are by no means synonymous*" (p.4). The two are based on differing epistemological approaches; there are valid reasons, therefore, for distinguishing between the two. General education then becomes what Miller (1988) identified as, the third option. Thus the continuum is

extended to include the ideologies of liberal, general and vocational education (see Fig. 3).

*Fig.3 The Liberal, General and Vocational Education Continuum*



These three approaches when viewed conceptually are distinct and even competing paradigms. This is made explicit as the central and peripheral characteristics of each paradigm are reviewed. What this review also highlights is that although conceptually they may be very different, in practice there appears to be some instrumental and pragmatic shared values and approaches. A taxonomy such as this requires that similarities as well as differences be teased out, allowing each concept to be redefined in a modern context.

### **Curriculum Criticism**

The diverse nature of post-16 educational provision means that there are several sets of curricular models and programmes of study in operation at any given time. These are not static; educational provision is dynamic, constantly changing to meet the needs and demands of the age. Such changes have seen the introduction of NVQs and GNVQs, which are replacing such courses as City & Guild craft awards, RSA Examining Body awards, and BTEC awards. Modifications have also been suggested for traditional A Level programmes (National Commission on Education 1993). It is concrete examples such as these that have been seen as central to the 16 - 19 curriculum, that are subject to a curriculum criticism.

The type of curriculum analysis to be employed in this study is that described by Mann (1969), Eisner (1980), and Ross (1990) as 'curriculum criticism'. It is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of educational materials and settings whose function is:

*"to describe the essential qualities of the phenomenon studied, to interpret the meanings of and the relationships among those qualities, and to provide reasoned judgments about the significance and value of the phenomenon."*  
(Ross, in Sherman and Webb 1990, p 162)

Bearing this in mind profiles of each of the identified models have been established. These profiles are not themselves ideal types. Rather they aim to describe the central characteristics of each of the models or curricula, examining historical development, philosophy, aims, content, teaching and learning methods and the current climate in which each model finds itself, using the field of Business Studies as an exemplar. The aim is to compare the traditional approaches to the 16 - 19 curricula with current vocational approaches.



## **Field Research**

Initially contact was established with a randomly sampled group from four further education colleges and three school sixth forms. The reason both types of educational establishment were included in the study was to ascertain whether any differences in experience or problems encountered existed depending on the type of institution. This was considered a possibility due to further education colleges having a long history of delivering vocational courses compared to school sixth forms having a predominantly A Level tradition.

In-depth, semi-structured, interviews were conducted with GNVQ coordinators, staff concerned with GNVQ course provision and students studying at Intermediate and Advanced Levels at both types of institutions. A plethora of issues arose out of these interviews. The findings were scrutinised for the relevance to the study and used to develop further research questions.

The areas deemed worthy of further study because of their value within the research programme, were then formatted into questionnaires: one of which was aimed at staff implementing GNVQ programmes and the other aimed at GNVQ Business students. These questionnaires were initially piloted and latterly implemented in the two types of institution: the further education colleges and the school sixth forms. The rationale behind these questionnaires was to confirm the findings of the initial interviews and add credibility to the findings by involving a larger cohort of respondents.

The second phase of the field research involved national figures who are concerned with educational policies within organisations such as NCVQ, FEU (Further Education Unit, now FEDA - Further Education Development Agency), CGLI (City & Guilds of London Institute), those implementing the educational policies including a professor at a large university who had expressed concern over the way vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds are developing and progressing and an individual responsible for Curriculum Development in a large further education college and representatives from industry - this included Training and Development Representative from Zeneca (formerly ICI) and The Halifax Building Society. The rationale for involving the three levels of interest was to see if what happens at policy level was deemed important at implementation level and for use in industry. These in-depth semi-structured interviews were concerned with perceptions of liberal, general and vocational education and with attitudes to the current state of vocational education provision, primarily that of GNVQs. The notion of whether GNVQs can be said to offer any form of liberal education was also addressed.

The final round of interviews involved a second random sample from three further education colleges and three school sixth forms (none of which were used in the prior stages of the investigation) where GNVQ course coordinators, course leaders and those involved with the delivery of GNVQ Business along with students studying for the GNVQ Advanced Business were interviewed. Unlike the first round of interviews those studying at Intermediate level were not included in this second sample group. Reasons for this were threefold: firstly, the comparisons of GNVQ Advanced with A Level programmes in terms of parity of esteem and intellectual rigour were not seen to relate to the Intermediate programme; secondly, the notion of an academic/vocational divide was

seen to be directed at the GNVQ Advanced Level as opposed to the Intermediate Level; and thirdly, the results of the first round of interviews indicated that the Advanced Level students were more inclined to discuss their experiences and perceptions of their GNVQ programme.

The aim of the second set of interviews with staff and GNVQ students was to test and verify the findings of the interviews with educationalists and industry representatives at a grass-roots level where educational policies are actually implemented. All the interviews conducted for the study were in-depth, semi-structured and on-site, were recorded and later transcribed to ensure accuracy of conclusions drawn.

At each stage of the development the people who were involved with the study were informed of and given access to the information and results which were generated.

### **Initial Exploratory Interviews With Staff and GNVQ Students (1)**

#### **A Note on GNVQs**

GNVQs were first introduced in September 1992. One of the first areas introduced as a GNVQ course was Business Studies. It has the benefit of being a well developed, tested and established field of study within GNVQ programmes. Business Studies, in addition, form an intrinsic part of other areas of study, eg: Leisure and Tourism - Promoting Products and Services; Health and Social Care - Customer Service. Furthermore, Business Studies can be seen to be in direct opposition to one of the traditionally liberal education ideals: that which holds education for the 'good life' as central - the 'good life' being understood here as largely free from commercial preoccupations. The background of the researcher is that of Business Studies, a point which was thought to allow greater insight to be brought to the situations under investigation. It was for these reasons that the field of Business Studies was deemed an appropriate area to allow conclusions to be drawn and made generalizable. The focus of attention was therefore on the field of Business Studies in that staff and students approached were from this discipline area.

#### **The Interviews**

Initial in-depth, semi-structured, on-site, exploratory interviews were conducted with staff and students concerned with GNVQ courses in an attempt to identify those areas that were appropriate for further study, and of value to the research project. This set of interviews involved three school sixth forms and four further education colleges from across the country. At each of the establishments interviews were conducted with small groups of students at Intermediate and Advanced level, the GNVQ coordinator and a minimum of three course tutors. A total of seven GNVQ coordinators, thirteen lecturers concerned with the delivery of GNVQ Business subjects and sixty five students were interviewed at this stage.

The questions posed to the staff implementing GNVQ programmes focused on difficulties encountered due to changes in teaching and learning methods, implementation and assessment (which incorporated issues relating to Key Skills). Student interviews focused on their background knowledge of GNVQs as opposed to other course



provision, the choice they had about enrolling on a GNVQ course, the changes they had experienced in the approach to learning, their attitudes to their GNVQ experience and what they intended to do in the future.

The attitudes were recorded and the findings considered valuable to the study were used to develop an hypothesis. The interview data that was concerned with those areas deemed to be of value to the research project became the starting point for further investigations. These propositions were used to develop research questions for survey techniques which further explored staff and student perceptions of GNVQ provision in order to make the findings more generalizable, adding validity to the results generated. The interviews were designed as a pre-pilot to the questionnaires which were the main vehicle of investigation at this stage of the study; the findings of these interviews were central to the direction taken with the questionnaires.

### **Questionnaires**

The interviews highlighted a plethora of issues concerning GNVQs. The information was scrutinised for its value to the project and questionnaires developed out of the pertinent issues. A self-completion questionnaire was designed, a prime objective of which was to reach a greater number of staff and students and therein gauge their perceptions and attitudes to the vocational qualifications; thereby improving validity when gauging the responses to the questionnaire.

Hoinville and Jowell (1977) state that questionnaires should be *"clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable."* To achieve this aim a small-scale pilot survey was carried out to test the questionnaires 'in the field'. This pilot survey was given to designated groups of staff and students. To ensure that responses to the questionnaire were maximised it was administered to groups gathered together and completed at the same time, as recommended by Babbie (1992). Redesigning took place where confusion was experienced by those completing the questionnaires; thus it was ensured that the questionnaires were uniformly workable and easily understood.

The questionnaires were then distributed. An entire cohort of students studying for a Business Studies GNVQ at Intermediate and Advanced level in school sixth forms and further education colleges was targeted along with their tutors. The rationale for including both Intermediate and Advanced students was that the possibility of approaching students that have experience of both levels of the qualification would indicate whether attitudes change when students have experienced the system and whether attitudes differ entirely according to the course level entered.

A structured, self-administered style of questionnaire was implemented. The questionnaires for staff and students were different, both developed points raised in the initial interviews. The Education Authorities Directory and Annual (1993) identifies 67 further education colleges in the Yorkshire, Humberside and Lancashire regions. The objective was to send out questionnaires to a 30 - 50% sample, meaning that between 21 - 33 further education colleges would be involved in the study and an equal number of school sixth forms. It was initially proposed that links and contacts established by the School of Education at the University of Huddersfield for use in placing trainee teachers



would be utilised. In retrospect this may have been naive. The pressures and time constraints of those undertaking the teacher training proved too great to incorporate the additional obligation of distributing the questionnaires.

In line with the original proposal 25 further education colleges were targeted for completion of the questionnaires (constituting 33% of the further education colleges in the specified location) as were an equal number of school sixth forms.

The response rate, illustrating a problem with postal questionnaires, was only eight further education colleges and seven school sixth forms returned completed questionnaires. Forty-five members of staff completed the forms (68% of which were based in further education colleges and 32% school sixth forms). Two hundred students studying for the GNVQ Business responded: 62% (124) were studying in a further education colleges and 38% (76) school sixth forms. Of the students responding 64% (128) were studying at Advanced Level and the remaining 36% (72) at Intermediate Level. The number of institutions returning completed questionnaires was approximately 33%. The sample size was 12% (eight out of sixty-seven colleges).

### **Interviews With Educationalists and Industry Representatives**

The literature review and the survey questionnaire gave a strong indication that confusion exists over definitions of liberal and general education, and whether they are in fact different or synonymous. A further point of interest was whether GNVQs, being vocational, could then also offer a general or a liberal education and whether we should want them to. The question of whether the 'general' in GNVQs was added to redress the perceived low status of purely vocational programmes or whether GNVQs did in fact offer some form of a general education was also a concern. Recognising that GNVQs are inherently connected to vocational education the aim was to explore this alongside perceptions of what was involved in a liberal and a general education. Another set of interviews was deemed necessary to address these issues. These interviews were conducted with educationalists and representatives from industry and were concerned with GNVQs and their place in the 16-19 education sector.

The base for these interviews required a return to the philosophy of education where liberal education is a frequently used and diverse term which is applied to many different situations. Definitions are prolific in the relevant literature - finding any consensus is problematic. In some cases general education is used interchangeably with liberal education; on the other hand there are many who do not consider the two to be synonymous but in fact very distinct. Finding an absolute definition or description of either liberal or general education is onerous. However, when trying to evaluate the differing paradigms of education many of the same descriptors are utilised in an attempt to classify and offer some explanation of what is involved in each paradigm. Some of these descriptors are used for one or more paradigms, thus causing further confusion.

In an attempt to clarify just what constitutes each paradigm of liberal and general education at this point in time, a set of commonly used adjectives was drawn up; for example, Creativity, Beliefs, Values, Cultural Inheritance, Political and Economic Awareness, Team Work, Specialisation, Intellectual Excellence, Data Analysis and

Critical Analysis. This list was by no means exhaustive.

Seven representatives from education and industry, from a variety of backgrounds, were then asked to indicate which they considered to be related to liberal and/or general education, going part way to defining what each paradigm is seen to mean, in broad terms. The interviewees were then asked how they personally would define liberal education and general education. With these two broad outlines in mind the aim of the interviews was to try to establish what those involved in the study considered necessary in education for 16 - 19 year olds. This brought to the fore the issue of GNVQs: were any of the perceived necessary attributes present in GNVQs? should they be? This allowed GNVQs to be discussed in terms of liberal education and general education as well as vocational education.

### **Further Interviews With Staff and GNVQ Students (2)**

This final series of interviews was conducted in six establishments offering GNVQ Business at Advanced Level: three further education colleges and three school sixth forms. Those involved with teaching GNVQ Advanced Business and those studying the course were interviewed; eighteen staff including course coordinators, tutors responsible for the delivery of Mandatory Units and those concerned with Key Skills delivery were involved in the study along with forty-four students: twenty-six on the first year and eighteen on the second year of the two year programme.

The purpose of these interviews was to investigate what the GNVQ experience entails and what the students can be said to leave further education with. Questions were raised concerning teaching and learning methods, breadth of the programme, its relevance to, and preparation for, the 'real' world, critical analysis and thinking skills and the ability to develop and enhance creativity, initiative and independence. Contrasts with A Level study were also drawn. Such questions were raised in an attempt to evaluate what was said (by the educationalists and industry representatives) to be present in a GNVQ programme against the grass roots reality. This further tests the hypotheses and increases validity of the findings in an attempt to outline what educational programmes for young adults should be encompassing.

## **Analysis of Data**

### **The Correlation**

First, a literature review into the concept of ideal types (Weber 1949; Hodkinson 1991a) initially assessed its relevance to the project (Giddens 1971, Aron 1972) in order to apply the concept to the realm of education. Ideal types of liberal, general and vocational educational were then established.

Secondly, a form of curriculum analysis was employed, that which Mann (1969), Eisner (1980), and Ross (1990) described as 'curriculum criticism'. Concrete examples of courses in Business Studies such as A Levels, BTEC, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs were subject to analysis. This took the form of an analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of each curriculum model, taking into consideration the design, aims,



content, processes, teaching and learning methods and intended outcomes, as well as the progression routes of students.

The ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education were then related to the various profiles of business-related educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds. The ideal types and the curriculum profiles were mapped against each other and correlations developed whereby the material gathered in compiling the curriculum profiles, which took into account traditional approaches to the 16 - 19 curricula and current vocational approaches, was examined in the light of the three ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education. Liberal, general and/or vocational educational tendencies were therein illuminated, allowing the educational paradigms to be assessed in a modern context.

### **The Initial Exploratory Interview Findings (1)**

This study is based on reasoning which follows the inductive - deductive approach. Initially this involved the study of a number of individuals and institutions that were concerned with the delivery of GNVQ Business at Intermediate and Advanced Levels and issues perceived as relevant with regard to education for 16 - 19 year olds. The findings of the initial exploratory interviews formed the basis for the hypotheses which were to be tested throughout the study, allowing the issues discovered to be subjected to a series of tests to justify the results.

The survey identified a number of points that would need to be verified in the questionnaire results. For example:

- \* the breadth in a GNVQ was considered wide ranging in its vocational context: however, greater breadth was considered beneficial in helping to prepare individuals for the multitude of situations that might face them in the world in which they will subsequently operate
- \* the student centred approach advocated in GNVQs was favourably received: however, students called for a combination of initial formal input followed by individual and group work which was thought to promote students' independence and act as a form of preparation for all kinds of future progression.

### **The Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire dealt with attitudes to, and perception of, GNVQs using Business Studies as an exemplar. Such attitudes and perceptions were concerned with the ability of GNVQs to offer a liberal, general or vocational education. The same questions were asked about A levels and the responses compared. The computer data analysis package SPSS was used in this analysis in order to gain an accurate picture of the findings. Calculations such as the Mean, Mode and Standard Deviation were implemented along with a series of Pearson Correlation Coefficients whereby significant responses were checked against similar variables in order to ensure reliability and validity of the responses and thereby the findings.

Where the questionnaire responses could be equated to the initial exploratory interview



material the hypothesis was borne out. For example;

- \* the breadth in a GNVQ programme was favourably received and was seen to promote a general education: however, a potential area of concern revolved around the common belief that it was a liberal education, rather than a general education, that was essential for individuals in post-16 education

- \* the student centred approach was seen to be a distinct advantage of the system; it was seen to help in the development of confidence, independence and individual responsibility it was also seen to help maintain student interest and motivation.

The information gained in this attitudinal survey was then further compared to the desk-based research of curriculum criticism and ideal type analysis, allowing for further testing of the findings in an attempt to make the resulting hypotheses generalizable.

### **The Interview Findings (2)**

Having established that much confusion exists in relevant literature as to what constitutes a liberal education one purpose of these interviews was to ascertain how certain educationalists and industry representatives defined a liberal education. This necessarily required that it was distinguished from general education. Having clarified what was perceived as liberal and general education the direct question of whether any of these perceived traits were present in GNVQs was posed, as was the issue of what should be there but was currently lacking. These results allowed liberal education and general education to be defined in a more modern context than that of the 19th century ideal. It also allowed GNVQs to be evaluated in the light of such definitions in an attempt to tease out liberal and general educational tendencies.

Having outlined, on a conceptual level, what was considered to be a liberal education and a general education and mapped GNVQs on to such criteria where possible, the findings had to be checked against reality. This involved staff and students in further education colleges and school sixth forms. Their opinions were sought as to whether the same identified criteria were concerns of liberal and/or general education and whether such aspects were present in GNVQs. Ultimately, specific qualities that are desired in post-16 education were identified and appraised in the light of the ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education and compared to GNVQ provision. These interviews were again part of the inductive - deductive model whereby justification for initial discoveries was the aim of the investigation.

The findings of this stage of the research developed the following hypotheses:

- \* a liberal education was seen as the way forward for post-16 education over general and vocational education

- \* liberal education was identified as representing aspects such as self-development and self-growth; this was related to the development of sets of values and beliefs, a moral conscience and social, political and cultural awareness: these factors

were identified as enabling the individual to become more fully aware of what is happening in their immediate environment and in a broader context, thereby facilitating individual development.

\* another common denominator of liberal education was identified as 'knowledge': liberal education was associated with cultivation of the intellect through the development of an inquiring mind where independent thought and reflection would allow the individual to make informed decisions and choices, separating knowledge from subjective opinion; factors bound up with the knowledge objective: such mind training when combined with the self-development aspects was perceived as being able to allow the individual to make sense of the world in which they function

\* GNVQs were identified as offering a general education with possible liberal overtones. These liberal aspects were seen to come from the way in which a student carried out their work, the teaching and learning methods , and the inclusion of Key Skills: for the main part this liberal potential was seen to be by default rather than design as such they were not thought to be fulfilling their potential.

### **Analysis of Liberal Education in a Modern Context**

This section brings together the established, historical views of each of the identified educational paradigms - those of liberal, general and vocational education - and compares them to the current situation. This takes into account the dichotomy between liberal and vocational education and that which exists between A Levels and GNVQs. It also considers proposed changes to 16 - 19 educational provision such as developments arising out of the Dearing Review (1996). This overview of historical and current thought, as laid down in relevant literature, is then subjected to further evaluation, comparing and contrasting it to the final series of interview findings; thus allowing liberal and general education to be redefined in a modern context taking into account the growth of vocational education provision and the role of GNVQs.

## CHAPTER 3 - IDEAL TYPE ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The concept of an 'ideal type' was developed by Weber (1949) in an attempt to interpret meaning; the theory being that when meaning is attached to actions or ideas they then become embodied in social norms, for example: socialisation, whereby people comply to socially acceptable behaviour; that which is seen as 'proper' or 'correct' set down as common guidelines, and understood as social rules, norms or expectations. Through interpretation of the meaning of these rules, norms or expectations, understanding and causal explanation of those actions or ideas follow. Weber suggests that out of these, ideal types are developed the function of which is the:

*"comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergencies or similarities, to describe them with the most unambiguously intelligible concepts, and to understand and explain them causally".*  
Weber (1949 p.43)

Such an undertaking allows vague ideas to become generalisable through *"the abstract synthesis of those traits which are common to numerous concrete phenomena"* (Weber 1949 p.90 & 92).

The value of implementing an ideal type analysis is that it can be a methodological means of establishing significance. It allows the selection and formation of characteristics to be specified as definite types. Hirst (1976) suggests that it can be seen as a form of abstraction from cultural reality which selects and emphasises the cultural significance of a range of phenomena. When it is applied to the real world both differences and correspondence with the model can be measured in terms of cultural significance. He goes on to say that ideal types are *"intended to represent a segment of empirical reality, i.e., a recurrent pattern of events"* (p.177). They do not *describe*, nor do they explain, but they *stand for* the segment of empirical reality concerned. Ideal type analysis is:

*"related to the notion of comprehension in that every ideal type is an organization of intelligible relations within a historical entity or sequence of events ... is related to ... the process of rationalization. The construction of ideal types is an expression of the attempt, characteristic of all scientific disciplines, to render subject matter intelligible by revealing (or constructing) its internal rationality. ....the ideal type is also related to the analytic and partial conception of causality .... it helps us to understand historical elements and entities."*  
Aron (1972 p.206)

When constructing an ideal type a theoretical pure type is formulated which describes what is characterised by a particular expected or normative pattern (Parsons 1947). Giddens suggests that although *"an ideal type is neither a 'description' of any definite aspect of reality, nor, according to Weber, is it a hypothesis; ... it can aid in description and explanation"* (1971 p.141). Further value of the ideal type analysis lies in the fact that its purpose is exploratory; even if a deviation from the pure form is encountered it too is of value, it can *"be examined in terms of the influence of irrational elements"* (Giddens 1971 p.148).



*"For the purposes of typological scientific analysis it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of behaviour as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action ... Only in this way is it possible to assess the causal significance of irrational factors as accounting for deviations from this type."*  
Weber (1969. Vol I p.6)

Having acknowledged the value of the concept of ideal types it is impossible to ignore the criticism that has been levelled at the same concept. Recent years have seen Weber's methodology come under attack. Greer (1985 p.1) suggests that this is essentially because it fails to predict the complexity of modern organisations, even though he recognises that the concept yields *"valuable insights into the thinking and reasoning"* of individuals.

Rex (1969 p.172) is more specific in his criticism. The fact that Weber's types represent limiting cases only, or that they involve 'a one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view', causes him problems. He suggests that *"this could mean that if taken to extremes, that the types were a kind of caricature, and one cannot in fact prove a caricature, because one knows in advance that in any particular case the elements of the caricature will not be there in a pure form."* They can be seen as limiting in that as a caricature they cannot reflect universal reality. Rex goes on to argue that if Weber had suggested that ideal types were simply *"theoretical abstractions, which could be applied to empirical fact only if preceded by a ceteris paribus clause, they could be regarded as a source of valid explanations"* (Rex 1969 p.173). He acknowledges that taken together with other factors they could explain observed events; but he points out that Weber always insisted that they were not abstract in this sense but referred to 'concretely possible' cases. As such, Weber's ideal types can be obscure and can only be a hypothesis and not a scientifically valid explanation.

Further limitations of Weber's ideal type method include the concern that the *"relation of the type to the concrete is arbitrary and ambiguous .... Weber's position allows an uncontrollable degree of freedom to the model-creator .... (who) gives significance to these meanings according to its own processes of selection and valuation"* (Hirst 1976 p.74). Hirst goes on to argue that the concrete existence of pure types is very infrequent because all action mixes rationality and irrationality in varying degrees.

In defence of the ideal type there is considerable evidence that Weber did not intend his ideal types to be applied to on-going situations:

*"His intention was to use the ideal types as tools the social scientist would use in making multiple observations. In effect the ideal type would become the reference point against which the researcher would compare his or her multiple observations. Instead of thinking of ideal in terms of "best", Weber thought in terms of "never changing". With a never changing model, then, it was possible to compare any number of observations with the model and to make generalizations about the similarities and differences."*  
Greer (1985 p.1)

Weber insisted that ideal types must be formulated in concrete rather than abstract forms so that they refer to 'objectively possible' courses of action. As ideal typical forms they should be of use to the empirical investigator to characterise, understand and give casual

explanations for actual historical wholes.

In spite of the heavy and varied criticisms directed against Weber's methodological arguments the constructs which he called 'ideal types' continue to be used and produced (Everett 1980; Greer 1985; Rimmer & Davies 1985; Jones 1991). Whilst it is accepted that ideal types are probably less pure than Weber envisaged they are intended for use at the point at which theory and description confront one another; without some such concept generalising would be impossible. Giddens (1971 p.141) states that the *"ideal type is not formed out of a nexus of purely conceptual thought, but is created, modified and sharpened through the empirical analysis of concrete problems, and in turn increases the precision of that analysis."* As such the use of ideal types in a number of situations and categories is possible. This becomes possible because Weber does not claim that his categories are general or exhaustive.

Ideal types are neither definitions nor empirical statements. They are *"descriptions of hypothetical constellations of phenomena, constellations which would exist if certain antecedent conditions were given empirically"* (Burger 1975 p.165). He goes on to suggest that *"they are constructed when it is desirable or necessary to characterize in a summary fashion the kinds of social phenomena existing in certain time periods and in certain areas"* (p.177). When utilising such a concept, ideal types can be seen only as a model, as an ideal typical statement and not an empirical one. It must also be remembered that ideal types are not theories, that they are neither proven nor disproven. The ideal type *"is no 'hypothesis' but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses."* (Weber 1949 p.90). The use ideal types have is that they provide illuminating *interpretations* of social facts rather than supplying valid scientific explanations (Rex 1969 p.173). It is for this purpose that they will be used in the analysis of liberal, general and vocational education. Past and current forms of 16 - 19 education provision in England and Wales will then be evaluated in terms of these ideal types.

### **Ideal Type Construction**

Ideal types have been identified as a technique in sociological theory which *"consists in constructing from varied details a representative model for an institution, role or function which enables it to be distinguished clearly, (and) its varieties classified"* (Gerth & Wright Mills 1948, Preface). They go on to suggest that further research leads to the refinement and sharper discrimination within the ideal type so that significant details of individual cases become more apparent. However, Giddens (1971 p.141) stresses that what must not be forgotten is that:

*"An ideal type is constructed by the abstraction and combination of an indefinite number of elements which, although found in reality, are rarely or never discovered in this specific form."*

This is best illustrated through Weber's own work on 'authority'. Within the concept of authority, defined as a *"sub-type of power in which people willingly obey commands because they see the exercise of power as legitimate"* (Abercrombie et al 1994 p. 24), Weber distinguished between legal-rational, traditional and charismatic authority, each of which have sub-sets of formal rules and characteristics. The elements of every day

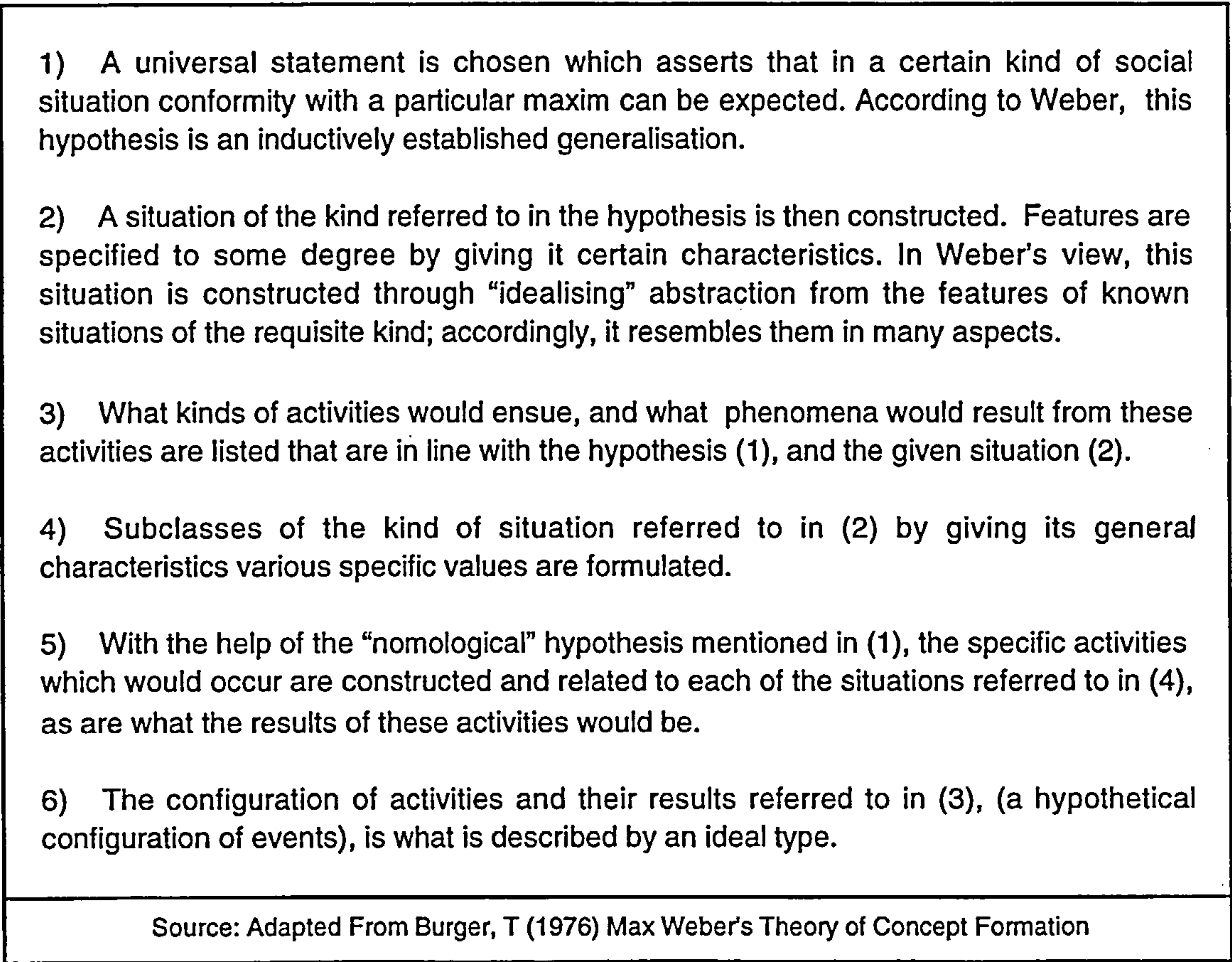


practice concerned with authority may not exactly match the elements of the ideal types, but they are able to illuminate variations, giving hypothetical constructions form, from real phenomena. In reference to Weber's process of abstraction which allows an ideal type to be constructed, an ideal type aims to accentuate essential features to render them explicable, Weber describes this process as:

*“An ideal type is formed by the one-sided exaggeration (Steigerung) of one or several points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffusely and discretely existing component phenomena (Einzellerscheinungen) which are sometimes more and sometimes less present and occasionally absent, which are in accordance with those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints, and which are arranged into an internally consistent (in sich einheitlich) thought-image.”*  
Weber (1930 p.90)

Each particular ideal type has to be discussed in its own terms. This first demands that the construction of concepts, which are specifically delineated for this purpose, is established (Giddens 1971). Then ideal types must be developed which will provide an organisation of intelligible relations within a sequence of events (Aron 1972), whereby comprehensive and logical patterns are formed highlighting the associations and interactions evident in the specified ideal types. A summary of what Burger (1976 p.160) suggests as the formulation of an ideal type, as it has emerged from Weber's description, involves the procedure shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4 The Formulation of an Ideal Type





This sequence will be followed in the construction of the ideal types of liberal education, general education and vocational education. It will also take into account an aspect of ideal types as raised by Giddens (1971 p.141):

*"the creation of ideal types is in no sense an end to itself; the utility of a given ideal type can be assessed only in relation to a concrete problem or range of problems, and the only purpose of constructing it is to facilitate the analysis of empirical questions."*

To this end the three identified ideal types will then be used as a base from which past and current educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds in England and Wales will be evaluated in an attempt to tease out liberal, general and/or vocational tendencies of each form of provision investigated. This will allow the ideal types to be used as a tool to give form to various models of 16 - 19 provision (Rimmer & Davies 1985 p.168). In formulating ideal types there will be an attempt to delineate, through empirical examination of the specific forms of educational constructs, the most important aspects which are distinctive to each educational ideal type (see Fig. 4 The Formulation of an Ideal Type).

## **Educational Ideal Types**

### **Introduction**

For the purpose of this study the Weberian ideal type will refer to the selected typical values constructing a logical perception of each phenomenon (Weber, 1962). Hypothetical characteristics for each ideal type will be clearly identified (Jones 1991, p.408). Hodkinson (1991b) argues that this means that in reality ideal types probably do not exist in such pure forms as they are crude positions; however their strength is that they are drawn up to clarify thinking.

Hodkinson (1991a) developed a set of 'Ideal Type Value Positions' in which he identified four educational ideal types: progressive academic, traditional academic, progressive vocationalist and traditional vocationalist. He suggested that they lie on a continuum which runs from the purely academic to the purely vocational. Here Hodkinson's work concentrates on vocational education and places academic education at the opposite end of a spectrum. Vocational is defined as "*education for an instrumental purpose*" and academic as "*knowledge for its own sake*" (Hodkinson 1991a p.28), thus setting the two apart and illustrating the divide between the academic and the vocational in England and Wales in post-16 education. However, confusion abounds since the definition used to identify an academic education has also been attributed to liberal education (Knoll 1981). The term liberal education has also been used interchangeably with general education, though Johnson & Moen (1980 - 1981, p.4) state that "*liberal education and general education are by no means synonymous*." It is suggested that there are epistemologically valid reasons for distinguishing a liberal education from a general education. Beck (1988) goes so far as to suggest that it is an error to keep apart the vocational from the general and liberal in education, in both conceptual and practical terms.

In this study it is proposed that, alongside liberal education and vocational education (which are frequently contrasted as two opposing approaches to education), general

education become the third option (Miller 1988), extending the set of value positions to incorporate the ideologies of liberal, vocational, and general education, thereby extending the continuum. This will allow the varied education models to be subject to an in-depth analysis. In doing so a comprehensive matrix will be developed to which concrete education models such as A Levels, BTEC, RSA, and NVQs, as well as GNVQs, will be related. This will incorporate aspects of the vocational, the general vocational, the general academic and the academic. The three educational ideal types to be constructed are:

Liberal Education  
General Education  
Vocational Education.

### **Liberal Education**

The Greek notion of liberal education, as advocated by Plato, has formed much of the basis for the philosophical development of the idea of a classical liberal education. In the 'Republic' Plato set out his 'ideal state' pivotal to which, for some, was a rigorous intellectual training which was thought to promote knowledge; for Plato knowledge is virtue. A low status was attributed to mere 'opinion' which was what was thought by Plato to be manifested in, for example, practical or commercial skills of use in everyday life. Such skills, expertise and training were segregated and held in low estimation and low social status when compared to the development of the mind, theory and knowledge, giving rise to a perceived intellectual elite. This gave an early impetus to the notion of 'vocational training' as being a markedly inferior form of 'education', hence not truly 'liberal'.

The three main traditions of a classical liberal education in Plato's rigorous intellectual training were concerned with the classics, mathematics and philosophy, which are studied for their supposed capabilities to train the mind and cultivate the intellect (Rothblatt 1976). This pursuit of knowledge and education was bound up with the 'good life'. Traditional values such as temperance, piety, courage and justice were seen as virtues that made for a good life; morality, and codes and principles of moral behaviour were seen to provide a set of ethics necessary for the good life where individual virtues and state happiness unite.

Those individuals who completed the training successfully were thought to be enlightened, to know what the 'good life' embodied, to possess the virtues of wisdom and reasoning which would allow the mind to come to an appropriate end, where reasoning would allow the mind to come to know ultimate reality; such were desired outcomes of Plato's intellectual training.

It was his belief that those men or women (the Guardians) who completed this rigorous training possessed the sagacity to form a ruling elite; their destiny was to govern society with a view to maximising the happiness of society as a whole. Individuals had roles to fulfil in society to ensure that this aim was met - roles that were allotted to them by the ruling elite. Each individual, in fulfilling their own role, was thought to contribute to the good of the whole community. This idea of a liberally educated society offered very little room for individual development. Plato appears to make no connection between happiness and individual liberty, only the greater good of the state, an ideal typified in his Republic;



that roles were allotted to individuals signals that the ruling elite made the decisions in this authoritarian society, leaving little room for any form of democracy.

The philosophy of Aristotle, with regard to education, was based on a similar premise to that of Plato. Intellectual contemplation was seen to embody what was considered to be good for humans. Ethical considerations involved reflective understanding of what was to bring the good life or well-being to individuals. Activities such as contemplation and virtuous actions, stemming from a virtuous character and wisdom, were seen to guide an individual toward the good life and personal well-being; the ultimate end of all actions being happiness.

Important differences between the two philosophies of Plato and Aristotle exist. Although issues of politics, morality and ethical conduct were central for Aristotle, as were the roles of individuals in society, greater emphasis was placed on tolerance, freedom and equality, the rights of citizenship and individual virtues in striving for individual happiness. Perfection was not a prerequisite, but aiming for such perfection was deemed important in that the ultimate end of all action was happiness. Aristotle placed greater importance on individual citizenship and happiness as opposed to that of the state and was of the belief that democracy was a more practical way to achieve this than the 'communist' society of guardians advocated in Plato's 'Republic'.

This classical conception of a liberal education, embodied in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, holds as pivotal three main premises: meaningful knowledge is that which is considered good to know in and for itself; the ability to see all things in relation to each other is considered important and should be developed; and that which is considered to be the best of what had been said and thought should be studied. The value of intellectual contemplation was seen as worthwhile in its own right, and for the moral improvement that may be achieved, and the resulting happiness of individuals and the state. Two central themes have developed out of the classical idea of liberal education, the peripheries of which overlap: the Humanistic objective ('the art of right conduct'), and the pursuit of knowledge ('the cultivation of the intellect').

### **The Humanistic Objective**

A central derivation of liberal education is represented by the humanists of Renaissance Italy (arguably the first renaissance philosopher was Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) and the last Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), as well as important, influential humanist thinkers and writers of the same period such as Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) and St Thomas More (1478-1535)), who were influenced by traditions passed down by the writers of ancient Greece and Rome, such as Plato and Aristotle, who encouraged the advancement of humanity by reinforcing social and cultural virtues and values. Liberal education explicitly becomes associated with living in the world in a morally acceptable manner, in that through this humans develop an understanding of how they ought to live, both individually and socially. It fosters a preoccupation with the meaning of an idea such as justice (or beauty or good) or the analysis of principles such as *Does might make right?* (Beck 1988). The essence of liberal education is seen as the attainment of qualities of character and intellectual and moral cultivation (Roderick & Stephens 1972). Rothblatt (1976 p.16) suggests that:



*“ideals of a liberal education were central to standards of correct or proper social conduct and notions of ethical self-improvement ... ‘the science or art of right living.’ It is the history of socio-moral conduct.”*

The underlying values of such a proposition are gentlemanliness, integrity and candour. Moral conduct entails reason, judgment and understanding and includes social aspects concerned with behaviour which can be expressed in style, taste, fashion or manners. All are deemed to be essential qualities and values which are pivotal to living. It is concerned with the wholeness and entirety of man, dignity and uniqueness, where man is viewed as a dynamic, conscious, striving, purposeful and creative organism (Issacson 1965); embodied in this are the many and subtle interpenetrations of history, society, politics, economic life, education which pervade character formation - an approach which has much in common with Plato's portrait of man, where such knowledge is seen as virtue. This illustrates the holistic approach of humanism to education and character formation as it emphasises the cultivation of the whole person: mind and body. The humanist objective is the 'civilized person' who is knowledgeable about human nature and the intricacies of social behaviour. Its purpose can be seen, then, not as helping one in making a living but to prepare one for living:

*“the original purpose of the humanist objective in English liberal education: life in the world, education for living with others.”*  
Rothblatt (1976 p.197)

Later the humanistic ideal of liberal education concerned with 'the good life' came to be associated with what has been termed 'etiquette' which offers a code of conduct for 'polite learning'. Included in this are such things as the rules governing one's daily life, how to improve or establish a respectable reputation and how to get on in fashionable society. Evident qualities of appearance and good taste (however defined locally) are a necessity along with the art of high conversation and social adequacy, tainting and reducing the Platonic ideal of liberal education to a process which caters to personal advancement whereby 'acting' in the correct and expected manner can serve to advance one socially. Thus education becomes inextricably linked with a social value system. In more recent times such behaviour has been used to advance one's career through what has become known as the 'old school tie' network where ethical and moral issues fall by the way and what becomes important is who, rather than what, you know (due perhaps to the school/university attended, for example Eton, Oxford or Cambridge). The highly ethical and moralist education which first embodied all that was good in the humanist ideal and valued honesty, integrity and decency has become corrupted and, in more modern times, come to imbue such aspects as the development of social skills, politeness and mannerisms, correct conduct and behaviour and social 'networking' exemplified as etiquette.

Philosophies such as these have followed the original Platonic theme of the 'good life' and general well-being where value and happiness in an individual's daily existence can be achieved through an ethical and moralist approach; the art of right conduct, as laid down in moralist and ethical codes and practices of behaviour, then promising a life of well-being and happiness. However, the humanist approach is not the only school of thought to be developed out of the Greek notion of a classical liberal education. An alternative school of thought embraces aspects associated with intellectual excellence in the pursuit of

knowledge.

### **The Knowledge Objective**

Cardinal John Henry Newman, in the nineteenth century, was one author, among many, who followed and shared a common core of thinking with Plato and Aristotle with respect to knowledge attainment. He saw liberal education as *“simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence”* (1852, p.121); this intellectual excellence he saw as bound up with *“philosophy, philosophical knowledge, enlargement of mind, or illumination”*. Central to Newman’s philosophy, as with Plato and Aristotle, was the emancipation of the individual through the quest for ‘truth’, through the questioning of accepted, established concepts and ideals. Such a cultivated, trained mind was seen to have the ability to see the relationship between every sphere of existence, to possess the capacity of logical argument and the ability to deduce and induce meaning from reasoning. The value of this was seen to lie in the belief that an abstract liberal education such as this could adapt itself to any other context:

*“it enabled a man to fill any post with credit and master any subject with facility”*

Newman (1852b in Sanderson 1993 p.190)

In such a light Newman saw liberal education, in striving for knowledge and intellectual excellence, as self-justifying, an end in itself, its own reward. In the pursuit of a genuine liberal education and the acquisition of real knowledge, attributes of good judgment and critical acumen and all-embracing insight were thought to be developed and enhanced; it was seen to go beyond mere learning. Such scholarly claims as these saw the growth of a liberal elite. This growth came at the expense of and detriment to scientific and vocational education whose development was suppressed due, in part, to the low status attributed to utilitarian and artisan pursuits. In more recent times this liberal elitism has been perpetuated by the high status and prestige attributed to a grammar school education, compared to that of secondary modern or technical education.

For Newman the Greek notion of liberal education, which held the pursuit of knowledge and the liberation from ignorance, absolute truths and ultimate reality through the use of right reason and virtuous actions, played an explicit and emphatic role and was central to his doctrine. Knowledge and wisdom were seen to be distinct human virtues on the path to the good life; these were seen as sufficient to identify the pursuit of knowledge as self-justifying, as being its own reward, an end in itself. The concern is ultimately with the unity of knowledge in which knowledge becomes an exercise in verbal inquiry by way of analysis thereby moving the student towards being philosophical. Here such disinterested knowledge was seen as being intrinsically valuable and an end in itself (Hyland 1994a p.117). An approach such as this, where enlightenment is focal, has strong links with the humane ideal of the liberal paradigm.

More recent liberal education philosophies following the same vein include the work of Peters and Hirst. Peters, a British philosopher working in the field of ethics, political philosophy and education, played a major role in the 1960s in establishing British philosophy of education as an academic discipline. His concept of education, as an advocate of liberalism was the study of ‘worthwhile activities’. These were largely of an



aesthetic and intellectual kind and pursued for their own sake. In developing his notion of liberal education Peters identified three salient features of liberal education as set out in 'Ethics and Education' (Peters 1966 pp.43-45): that it should not be limited to serving extrinsic ends, that education should not be too specialised and that it should not constrain belief in a doctrinaire way (Enslin 1985 p.216). Moralistic in his approach, knowledge was that which was deemed worthwhile, that which would promote a worthwhile form of life; that which would have "*the function of preserving and transmitting the ultimate values of society*" ..... "*transmit what a community values*" (Peters 1966 pp.43-45 in Enslin 1985 p.216) in the hope of preserving social order through what Oakeshott (1961) identified as "*education as initiation into a civilisation*".

Hirst sets out his stance in his essay 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge' (1965), a preoccupation of which is education suitable for a liberal society. Knowledge was seen as a virtue which brought with it the fulfilment of the mind and determined man's understanding about how life ought to be lived (both individually and socially); aspects vital to the good life. The pursuit of knowledge was again seen as a prime and direct concern of liberal education, as was the ability to extract universal truths. According to Hirst's nature of knowledge this required logical, empirical, rational and moral modes of thinking. This required the inclusion of certain moral qualities - again in line with the Greek notion of liberal education; moral qualities such as candour, fair-play and self-control, alongside aesthetic values like good taste (however defined), all of which were seen to be central to the pursuit of a genuine liberal education.

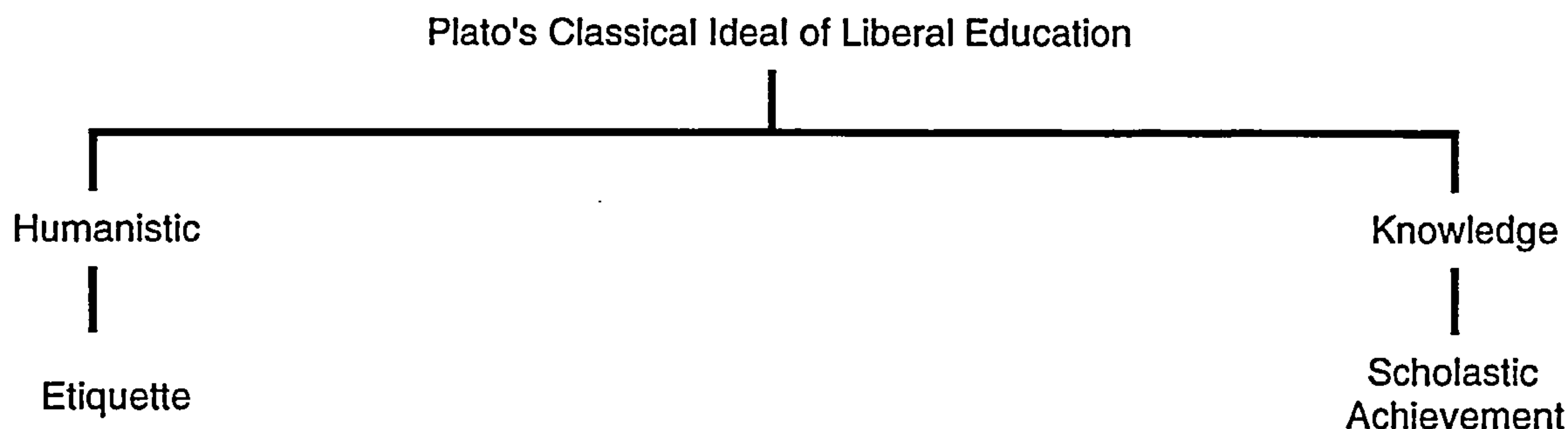
As with the humanist objective of a liberal education the knowledge objective, in more recent times, has also experienced a form of corruption of the original ideal. Where once there was the pursuit of intellectual excellence and knowledge attainment for the value it would bring to an individual's existence, now there is scholastic advancement, whereby academic qualifications serve as a platform for future progression and not for the enlightenment it may bring. For example, Newman's liberal education ideal which holds the rounded individual as central has come, in more modern times, to be represented by GCE A Level programmes which are seen as being socially prestigious, 'the gold standard' and the ideal preparation for university. Such an association has tended to devalue vocational education a consequence of which might be seen as an unproductive drain on the economy.

The above discussions serve to illustrate that "*the phrase 'liberal education' has become today something of a slogan which takes on different meanings according to its immediate context*" (Hirst 1965 p.1). From Plato's concept of a classical liberal education, where the cultivation of the intellect in line with moral and ethical codes of behaviour brought about the happiness of society as a whole, developed the two schools of thought of the Humanist objective and the Knowledge objective. The Humanist objective was concerned with an individual's ability to conduct themselves in society at large in the full range of situations that they might find themselves, and the Knowledge objective with the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual excellence with a view to improving daily life through the enlightenment such knowledge can bring. A further development and perhaps a distortion of the original concept has since occurred. Where once there were the Humanist and Knowledge ideals now there is etiquette and social skills on the one hand and



scholastic achievement on the other. The differing objectives and development of liberal education are depicted below:

Fig.5 The Differing Objectives of Liberal Education



### Further Liberal Education Themes

To suggest that Newman, Peters and Hirst have been the only philosophers to discuss aspects of liberal education since the time of Plato and Aristotle would commit a great injustice to the development of ideas and perspectives of a liberal education. For example, Hutchins (1936 p. 182) when trying to define liberal education cites H. Taylor (1950) when he suggests '*rationalist*' assumptions. This is picked up by Erickson (1992 p.16) who refers to:

*"rationalism's objectivist assumption of the existence of an independent reality of fixed laws and absolute truths, where knowledge per se is the object of human learning and inquiry."*

The point is developed further to encompass the suggestion that knowledge retains the character of a fixed body of truths and principles. It is the uncovering of these truths that is considered to be of prime importance. Van Doren (1959) suggests that liberal education uses the enduring truths of the past as the schema by which students are guided in the present; a concept that is asserted by many (Adler 1986; Hirst 1974; Bloom 1987; and Cooper 1993). Essentially, therefore, this particular perspective of liberal education looks to the past for a sense of direction, for a pattern of meaning (Miller 1988). The problem is that, although there is much to learn from history, the environment in which individuals operates today holds many different values and perspectives to those held in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: some of which are difficult to relate to the idea of knowledge *per se*, especially where enterprise and a flourishing economy are deemed important.

Further discussions of liberal education have suggested that it has an '*essentialist*' nature (Rice 1972) which Erickson translates as being concerned with a prescribed curriculum of essential subjects; a core curriculum approach. This core curriculum is a vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge. Due to rationalist assumptions methods are based on the formal discipline theory of learning where the goal is the mental disciplining of the mind. Liberal education is, therefore, discipline-centred. It is concerned with the *unity of study* where,

by reason and logic, students are guided through a core of studies towards 'eternal verities' (Bloom 1987). Formal lectures and mentoring are the preferred methods of teaching the prescribed content and *"repeating lessons is the only way to learn"* (Rothblatt 1976 p.46). Certain studies are prescribed as being good for the mind and therefore appropriate. Students, consequently, become intellectual consumers of the "Great Tradition" of attitudes, beliefs and bodies of knowledge (Van Doren 1959). Erickson extends this to suggest that liberal culture and right reasoning are transmitted and an appropriate level of "cultural literacy" is gained. This is expected in the A Level system today which relies heavily on tradition and embodies many of these characteristics; this, superficially anyway, contrasts with the GNVQ system where study is the responsibility of the student, creating a student-led and -centred approach to education.

Pring (1993 p.49) in his discussion of Paul Hirst's essay, 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge' (1965) suggests that:

*"The description of education as liberal simply emphasises this cognitive dimension .... the liberation from ignorance, the capacity thus engendered for participating in a broad range of knowledge-based activities, and the empowerment that arises from the insights into different ways of understanding".*

Pring (1993 p.65-6) in an attempt to summarise liberal education suggests that it pursues no ends beyond those set by the educational enquiries themselves, that it eschews clear objectives, as no one can say where the conversation will lead. He offers the idea of a liberal programme being a process, an engagement to which standards that are invoked are implicit within the different forms of enquiry. The quality assurance within liberal education, he suggests, lies in the judgment of those who are part of the engagement: liberal education introduces the learner to a world of ideas, of understandings, of imagination. A flourishing liberal education is not concerned with the distractions of the practical world; *"liberal education commonly is taken to exclude applied or occupational training, to continue the literary or home tradition in the college curriculum, and to encompass study both in depth and breadth"* (Johnson & Moen 1980-1981 p. 4). Liberal education, here, is an investment in intellectual values, the reward for which (largely an act of faith) is the enhancement of those values. One such reincarnation of liberal education may be found in the work of Dewey whose philosophy surrounding 'education' was concerned with how life should be lived. In his attempt to address such a question Dewey argued that the gap between morals and science should be bridged: points which will later be shown to have links with general education provision, and possibly that of vocational education, as well as the liberal education ideal.

### **Criticisms of Liberal Education**

Areas of concern in the depth and relevance of approaches such as these are evident. The late nineteenth century saw liberal education become central to the university curriculum. The assumptions were based on the liberal culture movement. The classics were central to this movement and were illustrated by *trivium* and *quadrivium* - the three liberal arts of grammar, logic and rhetoric (the *trivium*) plus the four of arithmetic, geometry, astrology and music theory (the *quadrivium*), seven altogether - the roots of which still form many university courses (Kingston 1994). However, certain characteristics of



classical/liberal learning in the universities were at odds with humane learning. For example: *"the syllabus, early specialization, the mind training, the ... recruiting through examinations, and the anonymity of the whole procedure of testing"* (Rothblatt 1976 p.143). Rothblatt (p. 80) also suggests that although a liberal education was supposed to be broadening, university teaching was narrow and a matter of outmoded rules. Where it was supposed to emphasise cognitive aspects such as clarity and elegance of thought, instead, students were taught to *"obfuscate and start hares"*. Where it was supposed to make its recipients *"attentive to the needs of others, instead, students were taught to be academic snobs"*. So, although the university curriculum had taken its lead from the humane learning of a liberal education, it promoted an environment of study and mind training that was at odds with the moral and cognitive aspects of humane learning. This is compounded even further when the basic principles of the essentialist orientation of a liberal education are investigated. Brubacher (1969 in Collins et al 1978 p.75) identifies these as:

- A) *learning necessarily involves hard work and application*
- B) *the initiative in education should be with the teacher rather than with the pupil*
- C) *the heart of the educational process is the absorption of prescribed subject matter*
- D) *the school should not abandon traditional methods of mental discipline."*

This implies that emphasis is placed on authority which comes from tradition and which claims to distinguish the essential from the non-essential in curricula. Furthermore, a liberal education, *"founded on rationalist assumptions, oriented toward essentialism, and based in the methods of logic, is concerned with ideas in the abstract, with the conservation of universal truths handed down through the years, and with the development of intellect"* (Erickson 1992). Erickson goes on to argue that this advocates a focus on the discipline of the mind along with the study of a permanent body of essential principles and knowledge handed down from antiquity. Curtis (1968 p.110) suggests that an approach such as this made the curriculum and the methods of instruction narrow, formal and academic in outlook, a criticism that can be levelled at current A Level and traditional degree programmes. It is further argued that this is *"out of contact with the growing demands of the age"*, again a charge that is brought against A Levels which have been seen to be in need of modification (National Commission on Education 1993). Curtis cites Bacon, Milton and Locke when he criticises such approaches; all of whom had severe reservations about such a narrow focus and suggested various expansions.

When considering the knowledge objective of a liberal education and the cultivation of the intellect Peters and Hirst have been criticised for their over-emphasis on the cognitive component of 'knowledge' which neglects practical knowledge and concentrates on propositional knowledge (Pring 1976), a charge that can be directed at Newman also. Enslin (1985 p.214) goes on to argue that Hirst:

*"legitimizes the assumption that the traditional middle class subjects of the grammar school represent 'knowledge'. By favouring propositional, abstract and theoretical knowledge over practical knowledge, Hirst's liberal education serves to perpetuate the distinction between mental and manual labour. His absolute view of knowledge and education presumes that the knowledge and theorising of the teacher is superior to the pupil".*



This argument is extended to include:

*"Hirst's view of knowledge ignores questions concerning the historically and socially determined production, reproduction and legitimation of knowledge, and fails to realise that knowledge reflects the interests of the dominant group in a society at a particular time".*  
Enslin (1985 p.217)

In the modern context of recent developments in the education system of England and Wales, where the promotion of vocational courses has been the highest priority of the Conservative Government since the mid-1980s to date, problems are self-evident. Rather than going part way to bridging any divide between educational systems the divide is perpetuated. A utilitarian or vocational education is continually seen to be at a disadvantage to a liberal education. These doctrines consider only the cultivation of intellectual excellence and the greatest good they can bring. Consideration of the utilitarian or the vocational, by defining education in terms of knowledge and skills that may be useful, are seen to play little or no part in the discussion of liberal education. The development of a creative imagination, of judgment, of critical thinking and rational and logical thought are often associated with liberal education philosophy only. Questions arise as to whether they can also play a part of the utilitarian, the vocational; issues that will be addressed in typifying the vocational education ideal type and in the curriculum criticism that is to follow.

By contrast the A Level system, academic in its orientation, is charged with aims of high intellectual development and cultural literacy and is often based on the seven classics and equated to a liberal education (an issue that will be followed up later in the discussion of the perceptions of educationalists and industrialists in the final round of interviews). Macfarlane (1993 p.20) acknowledges that the A Level curriculum has broadened its range in an attempt to offer a greater variety of specialisms but goes on to note that the emphasis is on specialisation and in-depth study of a limited field of enquiry. If this is the case then a genuine liberal education, although often equated with academic study, has lost sight of many of its initial aims and cannot be said to be found in the recipient of an A Level programme of study. For example: if a genuine liberal education is concerned with man's full understanding of the world and his place in it the study of two to four subjects, as in an A Level programme, cannot be said to offer truly liberal education.

Macfarlane (1993) suggests that the rationale behind the specialised approach to the A Level system is to *"groom a selected minority for Higher Education"* (p.28). Focusing on a selected minority of the 16-19 cohort again suggests that the curriculum is out of touch with the demands of the age. Its strength lies in the fact that it offers a form of credentialism for access into higher education that GNVQs are still not proved to have, irrespective of the fact that a variety of new degree and Higher National courses have been introduced, some of which are vocational in their conception. For example: Tourism, Hospitality Business & Management, Marketing, Business Studies; all of which can be studied at Higher National Diploma/Certificate or Degree level. Such courses include disciplines that have previously been considered academic studies - ie: essential elements of business courses include economics, political and legal studies, mathematics and computer science, statistics, sociology and more recently the inclusion of a mandatory

foreign language.

Modern degrees, such as those outlined above, are not perceived as offering a liberal education; indeed their offering of a vocational specialisation is thought to set them at odds with the ideals of a liberal education. As such, business, technology and applied science (as opposed to pure science which has traditionally been acceptable as part of a liberal education) struggle to gain admission to what Hyland (1994a p.116) sees as the *"privileged status"* which is enjoyed by traditional and academic programmes due, many would argue, predominantly to the social construction of knowledge and its high valuation of the liberal paradigm of education. This illustrates the general rationalistic tendencies that are characteristic of the modern period where emphasis and status is given to those subjects traditionally seen as being able to offer a 'liberal' education; those subjects based on the certainty of knowledge where the practice of reason, as opposed to religion, is the guiding principle in life. Associated with this is a mistrust of the putatively 'subjective' status of the moral domain which has tended to cause the moral objective of liberal education to become largely assimilated to the rational/epistemological approach; knowledge becomes that which is assumed to be 'good' for people via a process of enlightenment. The unstable existence of the moral objective has seen the manifestation of a degenerated form of moral meaning; 'social skills', in the form of etiquette and networking, have become the concern as opposed to pursuing virtue in its own right.

### **General Education**

General education has been seen as a reaction to what were perceived to be serious shortcomings of liberal education (Miller 1988, Foreword). The two terms are often used interchangeably and even seen as synonymous despite the fact that they have fundamental conceptual differences that lead in turn to important practical differences. Dewey made essential contributions to the philosophy of general education in an attempt to set it apart from the classical ideal of liberal education - although education was seen to be concerned with how life ought to be lived it was also concerned with bridging the divide between morals and science, and knowledge was seen as an object of inquiry as opposed to the unity of study of a liberal education.

Hutchins (1936 p.186-7) suggests that general education began as a movement to reform a *"curriculum that had become too specialized, too professionalized, and too removed from the personal needs of individual students."* This was in response to a liberal education where concentration was expected in a limited number of areas and to a narrow vocational focus on a specific role or field of employment. Beck (1988) suggests that general education should include some understanding of the world of work, of the processes and technologies embedded in the economy, to say nothing of the social, economic and political character of many such matters. Thus a general education is seen as having the ability to offer both breadth and depth in education in a variety of subjects. In doing so it is often related to 'schooling', referring to the education one receives at school in which the curriculum covers a wide range of topics which are thought to provide a platform for future use. Hutchins (1936 p.109), however, extends the idea from the school environment when he suggests that the process should be self-sustaining beyond even the formal college or university experience, making general education an ongoing, lifelong education. For general education to achieve this breadth and balance



would have to be uppermost; as would openness and lack of restriction, allowing for scope and potential to be developed alongside the focal points of cultural interests and intellectual ability. The ultimate aim of general education concerns the balance of breadth and depth, theory and practice, content and process, and knowledge and skill. This is in opposition to a specialised and in-depth study of a limited field of inquiry, such as that offered by A Level study and narrowly focussed training, generally of a vocational nature, with the goal of shaping the whole person as opposed to a single facet of their existence.

Some claim that general education has its roots in instrumentalism. Hutchins (1936), who cites H. Taylor (1950), and Erickson (1992) are two such authors. Erickson (1992 p.16) defines general education as being:

*“grounded in instrumentalism’s subjectivist assumption of the psycho-physical interdependent existence of reality, where the knowledge of ‘things’ is always limited by the impossibility of ever getting ‘outside’ oneself; where reality, as such, is always perspectival, i.e., incomplete, and truth - if not relative - is, at most, relational”*

Erickson goes on to declare that general education embraces a world-view, the nature of which presupposes the more subjective basis of reality. In this picture knowledge is seen simply as an *instrument* used for the development of character and for the enrichment of life experience (Dewey 1966, 1978). Such an ability to give meaning to experience allows order to develop from disorder. General education offers an integrated core personal and social education, including elements such as study skills, political and moral issues, health, sex and careers education. Macfarlane goes on to suggest that embodied in this should be approaches such as: *“discussions, reading ... school activities, radio and television, theatres, concerts .... various forms of project work and field studies, for work experience and community service. Case studies, simulation exercises and business games”* (1993 pp.49-52). Miller (1988) sees this as a result of general education being founded on pragmatic and contextual premises in which human problems and concerns, and therein experiences, provide the basis of its curriculum. Furthermore, he suggests that:

*“knowledge is hypothetical and should be regarded as a means to a desirable end: a fuller, more abundant personal life and a richer, freer society. To achieve this goal, knowledge from various sources, past and present, is utilized as and when it is needed, often in the solution of human problems. Indeed, general education is fundamental to the quality of life.”*  
Miller (1988 Foreword)

Rice (1972) and Erickson (1992) suggest an *existentialist* - priority of existence over essence - orientation to general education whereby there is an emphasis placed on an individual's goal in life and the values discovered therein. The individual's existence is of prime importance. Hutchins (1936 p.183) develops this line of argument:

*“general education, founded on instrumentalist assumptions, oriented toward existentialism, and based in psychological methods, is concerned with experimentation and problem solving for individual and social action, with the problems of the present and future, and with the development of the individual.”*

General education's main concern, therefore, is with ways of overcoming preconceived



ideas created by an intellectual structure or abstraction. It focuses on the needs of the students and their possible futures. Subject matter is viewed *instrumentally*; experience is central, as in Dewey's "reconstruction of experience."

Hutchins (1936 p.189) also points to a student-centred and future-orientated approach within general education. He suggests that *"it is concerned more with processes - the skills of inquiry, hypothesizing, and problem-solving - and with values and attitudes than with specific areas of knowledge. It is concerned with the immediate realities of daily life rather than with abstractions."* Leith (1989 p.71) sees general education skills as being concerned with quantitative reasoning, communication, understanding of interrelationships. Miller (1988 p.5) sees general education as:

*"a comprehensive, self-consciously developed and maintained program that develops in individual students the attitude of inquiry; the skills of problem solving; the individual and community values associated with a democratic society; and the knowledge needed to apply these attitudes, skills, and values so that the students may maintain the learning process over a lifetime and function as self-fulfilled individuals and as full participants in a society committed to change through democratic processes."*

Erickson (1992 p.18) states that general education *"relies on methods of teaching based upon developmental psychology's understanding of mental functions and human behaviour."* He supports his argument by going on to suggest that this can be attributed to assumptions based on instrumentalism. It approaches teaching from the methodology of collaborative learning and independence is incorporated into general education through increased student control over, and responsibility for, educational processes in a content that is relevant to life.

General education is often thought of as comprehensive in contrast to the narrowness of specialized education; being able to overcome the shortcomings of vocational education (eg: NVQs) and academic study (eg: A Levels) respectively. It does not, therefore, relate simply to knowledge, but to the entire environment in which learning takes place. It allows equal weight to be given to the goals, the procedures or methods and the content of the curriculum (Hutchins 1936 p.183). It is concerned with the student's total learning environment whereby out-of-class learning is seen to be as important as in-class learning and is student-centred around the *unity of inquiry*. General education approaches learning structurally from the interdisciplinary nature of content as well as from the perspective of education being *"an experience underlying the unity of knowledge"* (Dewey).

Miller cites Hutchins when seeking a purpose for general education. He identifies the purpose as being to 'cultivate the intellectual virtues'. He suggests that Hutchins means the classical virtues of induction, demonstration, philosophical wisdom, art and prudence - these would largely coincide with elements of liberal education. Erickson, however, suggests that general education has a more pragmatic aim; that it is concerned with the development of behaviours and actions through praxis, action based upon reflection. Within this concept, knowledge is seen as an instrument for personal/social growth and action. *"The intellectual, physical, emotional, moral and social development of students through a common core of experiences is the real aim of general education"* (1992 p.18).

Central to this is the empowering of the individual through a common core of experiences which will enable the student to acquire a breadth of knowledge (National Commission 1994 p.42). There is a focus on the present and future rather than the past and an emphasis on skills rather than abstract knowledge (Hutchins 1936 p.182). Education is a direct experience which cannot separate subject matter from the other aspects of the process, as such knowledge is organised around individual student needs. The fundamental implication here is that knowledge, for its own sake, is not a part of general education. Knowledge is selected instead because it will be valuable in helping the student deal with current and future problems, aspects of which GNVQs significantly seek to address. There is a bearing on, or relevance to, an individual's future as a whole: their function as individuals, as members of a community and as effective citizens. As such it aims to resolve the perceived problems of specialisation and narrowness in education; the ultimate aim being to achieve a balance between the theoretical and the pragmatic, the general and the technical, liberal and vocational, between know how and knowing that.

### **General Education as Distinguished from Liberal Education**

Dewey's educational ideas, which appear to embody the ideal that is outlined here as general education, hold central to its being a number of key premises. Firstly, that meaningful education was concerned with development of character and how one should conduct one's life. The difference between the general education paradigm and that of the liberal, which, in one of its many incarnations, holds as central the development of the intellect as bound up with the 'good life', is that an individual's own attempts to solve problems as they arise in social experiences are the basis for the development of character. The cultivation of intelligent habits, based on these social experiences, will maintain a social structure which encourages continuous enquiry, developing flexible, intelligent individuals (Abercrombie et al 1994). Growth of character will come from experience and is therefore open to all. This is in opposition to the liberal education ideal which holds 'truth' and 'fixed laws', as set down in tomes of accepted knowledge of the best of what has been said and thought, and the training of the body and mind in such aspects, as central to its being.

Secondly, general education, due to the emphasis and importance placed on personal experience and discovery, adopts a student-centred approach rather than the didactic teaching methods favoured in a liberal education. It also allows for possible vocational overtones in that personal experience will no doubt include some aspect of the world of work and the life enrichment such experience can bring - a point that is totally at odds with the liberal education ideal of knowledge where education is that which is concerned with life and living with others.

Thirdly, and in expansion of the previous point, general education aims to add breadth of knowledge to its repertoire whereby the subjects that are studied are those that will have a bearing on an individual's daily existence. This may involve politics, the economy, social activities included in which would be consideration of occupations, sports and leisure and family life - narrowness in education and knowledge being its anathema. Conversely a liberal education has tended to be equated to the 'classics' where the seven topics of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* are the areas deemed appropriate for study



leading to a possible narrow focus of study.

Finally, liberal education, historically, may be seen as perpetuating elitism and social divisions. General education, however, sees education as a *“social enterprise in which all individuals have the opportunity to contribute”* (Abercrombie et al 1994 p.215).

### **Vocational Education**

Historically a dichotomy has existed between vocational and liberal education and the tension between the utilitarian and the normative is an old one (National Commission 1984). Hodgkinson (1989 p.369) suggests that this division is more than structural, that *“it is deeply rooted in history, and supported by different ideologies”*. By outlining the central elements of the vocational paradigm the differences between the two approaches become evident.

The vocational is concerned with the acquisition of skills, qualities and knowledge that are judged to be important for entry into the world of work, either because they are required for national economic well-being, as with NVQs which are industry-led by lead bodies, or because the individual would otherwise be less able to make sense of that world and to make personal profit within it (Pring 1993 pp.60-61), as with the alleged qualities of GNVQs. An education which meets the demands of the economy is identified by Haralambos (1990 p.308) as having a functionalist orientation - a perspective that is most notably outlined by Durkheim, Parsons and Davis and Moore. Dewey also advocates the continuous analysis of society, taking into account its aims and needs (Collins et al 1978 p.59). This suggests a pragmatist assumption which focuses on the practical reality of education which, when it further extends to incorporate usefulness takes on an utilitarian bias. Utilitarianism, which is concerned with the greatest good of the greatest number, focuses on the requirements of the economy deemed necessary to promote social stability. When related to education this refers to the skills, qualities and knowledge which are important for entry into the world of work. The vocational, therefore, differs from the more general stages of education by being chiefly concerned with the application of knowledge acquired in the early stages of the educational process and the education of selected or differentiated groups. It also became associated with practicality (Roderick & Stephenson 1972). Williams (1994 p.89) argues this point further by suggesting that *“priority to applicable, as opposed to academic, knowledge”* is a priority for the vocational. A point that will be addressed later on in this chapter is the issue surrounding the importance vocational education places on knowledge and using that knowledge in application; knowledge which is no less rigorous than that found in an academic programme.

However a dichotomy also exists within the vocational paradigm itself; the role of education and training are seen as separate by some (Mansell 1985-1986). Vocational education and vocational training are frequently used interchangeably, yet the two are sometimes explicitly contrasted (Dearden 1984). Contemporary classifications offered by Hodgkinson (1991a) in his ‘Ideal Type Value Positions’ are the terms ‘progressive vocationalist’ and ‘traditional vocationalist’, illustrating that ‘vocational’ is an elastic term and covers many different ways in which the relationship between education and preparation for the world of work might be understood.



## **The Vocational Training Objective**

The idea of a curriculum geared to social utility saw its fullest expression at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century (Miller 1988 p.16). More recently this has been identified as being concerned with skills and competence rather than understanding and appreciation; for example, in NVQs where the learning process is a series of measurable products the performance criteria are relevant to industry and commerce and set in a realistic economic setting.

The notion of vocational training is almost always seen in terms of 'skills' which can be specified and stated (Holt 1987; Dearden 1984). The most obvious outcome of training and the development of skills is that the skilled person knows how to do something. The aim of vocational training is the achievement of 'something'; it therefore needs to be seen in conjunction with a specified outcome. It typically involves instruction and practice aimed at reaching a particular level of ability. The issue is one of competence, as in NVQs, where training is concerned with skill attainment. In its narrowest conception this is at a perceived low level. This is the argument put forth by Raggatt and Unwin (1991 p.140) who suggest that, in such a light, vocational training has tendencies toward narrowness and fossilisation. When such a charge is brought against vocational training it might be seen in traditionalist terms, as suggested by Hodgkinson (1991a). However, different kinds of practicality exist, not all of which are so narrowly conceived. Dearden (1984 p.59) illustrates this by stating

*"... it is necessary to train drivers and pilots, carpenters and surgeons, electricians and computer programmers. Other sorts of training are more concerned with dealing with people, as with training in sales techniques, training for supervisory positions or assertiveness training for women. Yet other kinds of training are more indirectly concerned with changing or controlling people or things, such as training to be an architect, lawyer or administrator. But in every case what is aimed at is an improved level of performance or operative brought about by learning"*

Implied in such a statement is that training is not necessarily only concerned with basic skill attainment. It operates at many levels which require varying degrees of complexity in terms of skills and knowledge requirements, not necessarily at a low cognitive level. In defence of this Peters (1966) points to the trained scientist, musician, architect, engineer or philosopher, all of whom must develop high cognitive capacities and would be considered highly intelligent and adept with regard to problem solving and to the principles that govern their specialist domain.

## **The Vocational Education Objective**

Pring observes that the vocational educational experience as a whole *"should foster attitudes and dispositions such as entrepreneurship and enterprise not normally associated with the more detached frame of mind of the liberally educated person"* (1993 p.62). In his attempt to offer a synopsis of vocational education Pring suggests:

*"The liberal programme is a process, an engagement; the vocational specifies the product (an 'output' compared with an 'input'). The ... standards of vocational education are those of successful performance on the job. The 'quality assurance' ... of vocational education is the conformity to 'performance indicators' established from without ... vocational preparation leads to skills and competencies ... (it) is pursued in the*

*- economic context in which skills and competencies apply ... (and) is an investment in accomplishment, the reward for which is economic success ... necessary for economic well-being.*  
Pring (1993 pp.65-66)

The vocational is readily associated with training whereby it denotes training for a specific job, career, skill or vocation; one which has in mind a particular context. Holt (1987), however, acknowledges that the notion of vocational education is a complex one: vocational education has the ability to stand alone without the need to be linked to a predetermined aim, goal or task. Holt cites Dearden when he suggests that vocational education is so described because it is more liberally conceived than vocational training in that it is concerned with *"learning about the nature of work, discussing its forms and contexts: a version of careers education in fact"* (Dearden 1984 p.65). Dearden (1984) goes on to observe that the *"development of knowledge and understanding in breadth and depth along with a degree of critical reflectiveness and corresponding autonomy of judgment"* are central to vocational education and that learning experiences that involve only skills acquisition cannot be termed vocational education. Vocational education at its best is that which Hodgkinson (1991a) has termed 'progressive vocationalist'. However, it is often seen in contrast to this as it is *"frequently biased towards a behaviourist, psychomotor conception of skill. That conception involves, in a sense, abstracting skills from any particular context or knowledge base and describing them as if they exist per se ... A balance of critical evaluation, knowledge, understanding and the skills involved ... form the ingredients of a future vocational education"* (Holt 1987 p.39).

Haralambos (1990) suggests that a functionalist perspective to education, as experienced in the vocational, implies that the two elements of instruction and experience combine to achieve the most positive outcome possible. As such, skill and ability in vocational education are not necessarily considered narrow:

*"By "skills" we refer to language, i.e. writing, listening, speech, and reading as well as foreign language, computation, and the use of computers and other technological tools. By "abilities" we refer to reasoning, formulating hypotheses, critical analysis, seeing connections between disparate events, ideas, and truths, which is the essence of interdisciplinary, relating to others, imagining oneself as the "other" or imagining a problem in a totally new position, which is the foundation of "creativity", formulating alternative views, leadership, learning on one's own and in groups, and developing natural talents."*  
Scott (1993 pp.5-6)

Thus vocational education, in its broadest conception, has the potential not only to prepare individuals for their chosen career path: but also they are well equipped to function within it, as well as within society as a whole. This is further fostered by the inclusion of values in the ideal. Scott (1993) suggests that possible values are inquisitiveness, a commitment to learning, ethics, discipline, a philosophy of service to others. Central to this position is involvement as a citizen, caring for others, empathy and tolerance. Weir (1985 p.7), in agreement with Scott, cites Bruce Dollar, Associate Director of the US National Commission on Resources for Youth 1983, when he suggests that occupational skills alone are not sufficient. Emphasis should also be placed on *"the cultivation of more generalised personal skills and resources such as responsibility, decision making, compassion and cooperation ... means of deepening young people's*



*understanding of their community ... integrated with the academic study of a related field.*" In response to demands such as these (among many others) GNVQs, by incorporating Key Skills, can be seen as an attempt to offer a broad based vocational education which incorporates so-called transferable elements that allow the individual to interact in their surroundings - social or working - by developing generalised personal skills such as articulation, communication, and interaction with the environment in which they are functioning. This approach may be considered progressive vocational education or what Silver and Brennan (1988) term 'liberal vocationalism', in line with the view that 'vocational education' is vocational training that has been liberally conceived (Dearden 1984 p.65). Clearly this formulation begins to overlap with both general and liberal education; the question remains whether such a marriage is a compatible or even a realistic one?

## **Overview of the Three Educational Ideal Types**

### **Liberal Education**

The classical liberal education ideal as seen by Plato has formed the basis for much of the subsequent philosophical development and thinking on liberal education. Plato, and to a lesser extent Aristotle, saw real or proper knowledge, as distinguished from lesser grades of cognition such as opinion, as justification enough for the pursuit of intellectual excellence. Great emphasis was placed on the role of authority (as with the Guardians advocated in Plato's 'Republic'), propositional knowledge, which holds reason and truth in knowledge, was central. The importance placed on moral judgments, the existence of ethical codes and principles and the search for ultimate truth were pivotal to ideals of liberal education in the pursuit of the 'good life'. Traditional values and virtues provided accepted codes of behaviour which were considered necessary in the cultivation of 'right' dispositions and character formation. Individuals were then encouraged to reflect on morality and politics with sagacity. Such would be the induction into the 'good life' and would ultimately make for state happiness (points which can be seen to have much in common with the Conservative Government's call for the increased awareness and development of so called 'family values'). As foundations these signify liberal education's rationalist, objectivist assumptions.

A core curriculum of prescribed essential subjects was seen as an important feature in the acquisition of knowledge. Rationalist assumptions of liberal education have meant that a formal discipline to the theory of learning, where the goal is the mental disciplining of the mind, were the aims; this discipline-centred nature was seen to be central in acquisition of knowledge. The *unity of study* which holds reason and logic, formal lectures and mentoring in a prescribed content, forms the ideal structure for meeting the aims of liberal education, pointing toward liberal education's essentialist orientation.

### **General Education**

General education has instrumentalist, subjectivist assumptions, in that knowledge aims to lend itself to some desired or valued purpose; knowledge is seen as an instrument for the development of character. Mentally valued capacities are those which have the ability to enhance life experiences. Knowledge which is deemed intrinsically valuable relates to



those attributes which allow individuals to make sense and order of the world. This 'individual' focus, which holds individual emotions, interests and experiences as central, indicates a subjectivist approach where individuals make sense of their own practical identity and fill out their existence.

Within general education knowledge and learning have an existentialist orientation; the individual is viewed as a free and responsible person determining and controlling their own development. Knowledge which is considered important surrounds those aspects that are thought to provide an essential background for the practical undertaking of everyday life. It is seen as an instrument for personal/social growth and action and aims to promote the attainment of individual potential. Personal action and experience is pivotal; emphasis is placed on individual goals, action and the values that are discovered; focus is placed on the reality of existence.

In educational terms this means that there is a focus on the needs of individuals and centres around the *unity of inquiry*. This requires a student-centred approach with the ability to enhance quantitative reasoning, communication and the understanding of interrelationships through knowledge that is relevant to life. Importance is placed on that knowledge which will be valuable in helping the individual to deal with current and future problems and issues in the full spectrum of their existence.

### **Vocational Education**

Vocational education is based on the utilitarian's pragmatic assumption which holds the view that the value of anything is to be judged in terms of how far it produced happiness, or diminished unhappiness, in the greatest possible number of people. In support of this utilitarianism is concerned with the view that the rightness and goodness of any action, or political institution, depends on the overall state of affairs consequent upon it; in modifying the vocational curriculum over the last decade the government has had as a goal the improved efficiency and competitiveness of the national economy. The benefits of such an improved economy were thought to have positive repercussions for individuals and the state working towards the greatest good of the greatest number.

This utilitarian assumption has much in common with pragmatism, a philosophy which evaluates assertions in terms of their practical application and consequences, and bearing on human interests in terms of the actual desire effect which would be maximally benefit-producing. The pragmatist assumption is also evident in a vocational education which takes into account the aims and needs of society, and focuses on the practical reality of education and that which works most effectively. Knowledge in this instance is that which is plausible and adequate to the needs of practice.

Vocational courses are, by definition, much more closely related to particular occupations than academic programmes of study. They are concerned with the usefulness and the quality of practical use. Some such courses do recognise the need for a broad range of transferable skills and personal competences which reflect the flexibility and adaptability required by today's working environment. The necessary transferable skill components help to prepare students for the non-vocational responsibilities of the social role in which the vocational course will cast them; pointing towards a functionalist orientation in

vocational education.

Summary

Fig.6 Summary of Educational Ideal Types

		<u>EDUCATIONAL IDEAL TYPES</u>	
<u>CRITERIA</u>	<u>LIBERAL</u>	<u>GENERAL</u>	<u>VOCATIONAL</u>
<u>ASSUMPTION</u>	Rationalism's objectivist assumption, of the existence of an independent reality. A world-view which presupposes an objective basis of reality comprised of fixed laws in which knowledge is content.	Instrumentalism's subjectivist assumption, of the psycho-physical interdependent existence of reality. A world-view which presupposes a more subjective basis of reality where knowledge is an instrument used for the development of character and for the enrichment of life experience.	Utilitarianism's pragmatist assumption, of the practical existence of reality. A world-view which presupposes a pragmatic basis of reality, where knowledge is an instrument for attaining economic and social goals.
<u>ORIENTATION</u>	Essentialism	Existentialism	Functionalism
<u>AIMS</u>	The disciplining of the mind through a prescribed common core of learning. The cultivation of the intellect whether it be for social gratification and life preparation, learning for learning's sake, or for the cultivation of intellect and academic achievement.	The empowerment of the individual through a common core of experience. The development of behaviour and action through praxis, action based on reflection.	An education system which meets the demands of the economy, and transmits society's norms as well as values. An educational approach which empowers the individual to learn specific skills necessary for their role in society and their occupations.
<u>METHOD</u>	Discipline-Centred	Student-Centred	Student-Centred / Economy-Led
<u>STRUCTURE</u>	Unity of Study	Unity of Inquiry	Unity of Competence
<u>EXAMPLES</u>	Education is for life in the world and living with others. Knowledge is an end in itself. Student independent reasoning in a curriculum relevant to life is encouraged. The ability to choose and define goals, through critical, reflective capacities. High importance is placed on factual knowledge.	Knowledge is hypothetical and regarded as a means to a desirable end. General education skills include quantative reasoning, communication, understanding of interrelationships, through experience. Breadth of knowledge is essential.	Knowledge is necessary for economic well-being. Skills, competency and knowledge are those which are important for the world of work, i.e. interpersonal skills, responsibility, decision making, cooperation, specialised knowledge and competency. Specialisation is relevant to industry and commerce. Fosters attitudes and dispositions such as entrepreneurship and enterprise.



## **Taxonomy**

Liberal and general education have sometimes been seen as synonymous. Reasons to which this can be attributed are three fold. Firstly, general education built on what was initially established in a liberal education. Secondly, extending the first point, both centre around the classics, nowadays often represented as 'humanities' or 'pure' academic subjects although general education tries to offer a broader curriculum so as to avoid narrowness and specialisation. Thirdly, both are concerned with knowledge and how it can improve an individual's daily existence. This is most evident when considering the National Curriculum (key stages one to four), the aim of which is to offer a broad based education concerned with specific areas of study that are deemed important for the future development of an individual. Subjects that are central to this programme of study are:- English (language and literature), mathematics and science, with additional topics including a modern foreign language, history, geography, and technology. When moving on to look at post-16 education a liberal education is often equated to the academic nature of A Level programmes, the topics of which develop in greater detail and depth those areas studied up to the age of 16. They also offer a platform for entrance into higher education and university life which is thought to bring what Newman termed 'intellectual excellence' as well as develop socialisation qualities allowing individuals to take part in Oakeshott's 'Conversation of Mankind'. General education is therefore the basis for future study, on both vocational and academic programmes.

The relationship between liberal and vocational education is a less contentious area as the two are frequently set apart as two very separate ideals. However, similarities are evident. Both liberal and vocational education focus on a narrow field of study; vocational education aiming toward specialisation in a particular field of work, and liberal education focusing on individual liberty, freedom and the classics, among other things, which are limited by the areas that are deemed appropriate for study. Vocational education is utilitarian in its assumption. It is concerned with the quality of practicality and usefulness. Although liberal education operates on a rationalist assumption which holds the role of right reason and truth as pivotal, it also has overtones of the utilitarian - the greatest happiness of the greatest number . The value of what is studied is sometimes judged in terms of how much it is thought to produce happiness - a central theme of utilitarianism. The idea of happiness in vocational education relates to economic wellbeing and what this can bring. Other similarities are concerned with the ability of an individual to interact in a given environment. Liberal education is greatly concerned with socialisation and how to conduct oneself in public. This translated into the vocational curriculum can be seen to re-emerge in the form of core skills. Communication, Information Technology, Application of Number as well as Working with Others, Problem Solving and Improving own Learning are all geared towards empowering the individual to interact in the working environment as well as in social situations. These skills are considered transferable; skills that can be adapted and used in a variety of situations thereby enabling the individual to interact in a variety of surroundings, in social or economic settings.

When considering the similarities between vocational and general education a central element is the preparation for work. Beck suggests that there should be a consideration of the world of work, of influences on that environment as well as social and cultural aspects. Parallels with vocationalism are then evident; aspects of future progression into

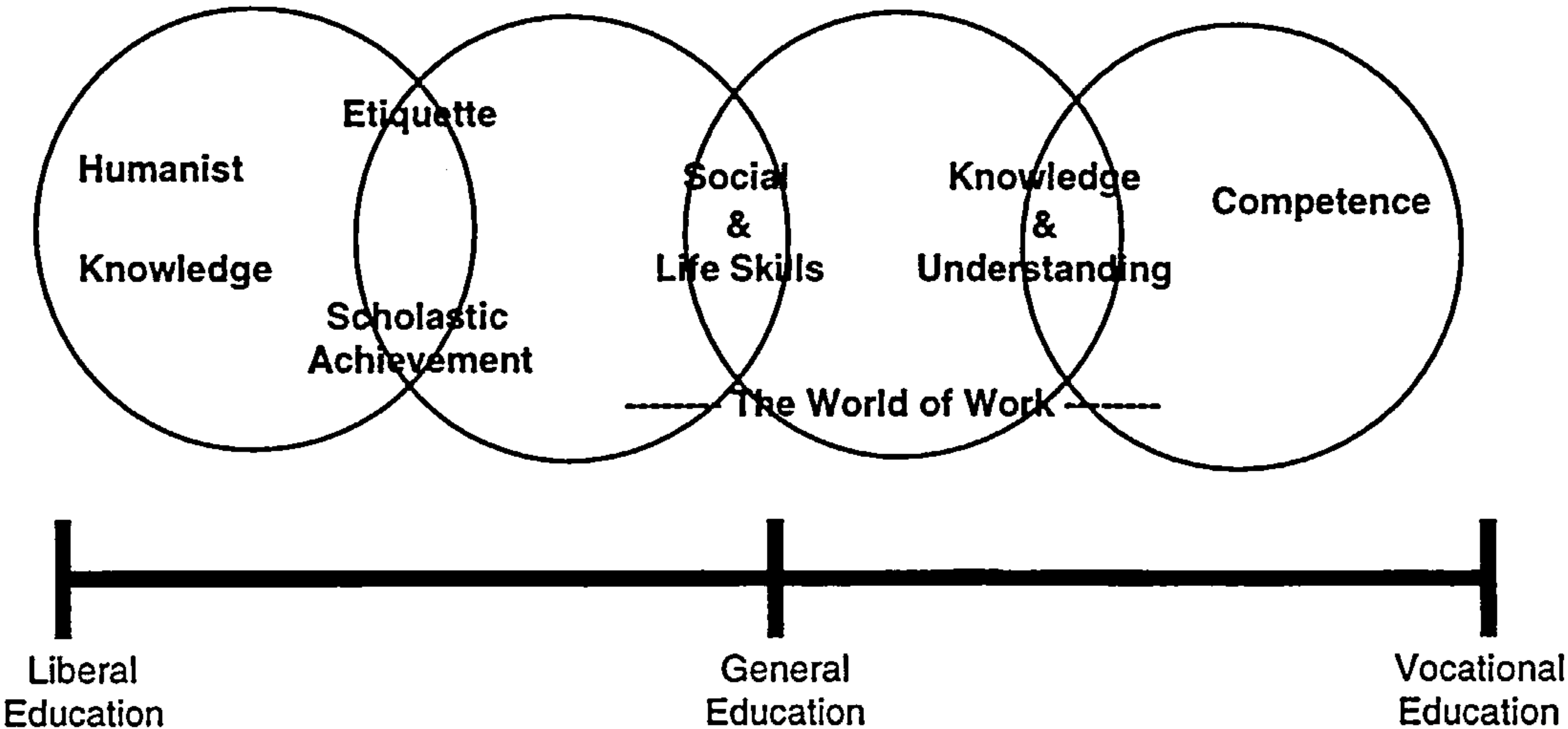


the working environment, giving consideration to economic and political factors that can govern trends in the way in which industries develop. For example: de-industrialisation and the subsequent rise of the service industry have changed the economic needs of the country, causing the skills required to change - the service industry relies on effective communication skills, whereas in the manufacturing industry of old craft competence and ability were of paramount importance. Issues such as these combine to demand breadth in education. This is a fundamental feature of general education but is also increasing in importance in vocational education. This can be illustrated by GNVQs which attempt to offer specialisation in a broad vocational area whilst also developing essential transferable skills. The development of transferable skills, such as those in a GNVQ (Communication, Information Technology, Application of Number, Working with Others, Problem Solving and Improving own Learning), play a focal role in liberal, general and vocational education. Further comparisons between general and vocational education exist when considering the aims and methods of each approach. Both can be student-centred where empowerment of the individual is essential. Experience is another common factor. It is necessary in vocationalism, specifically for competence attainment in NVQs, but it is also central to the ethos of general education.

**Conclusions**

Having discussed liberal, general and vocational education as three discrete ideal types reflection on the key characteristics of each model shows that they are not totally distinct, they have fundamental similarities which in fact makes them partially co-extensive in nature. Although they may be conceptually very different (as shown in Fig.6 Summary of Educational Ideal Types) in practice there appears to be some instrumental and pragmatic shared values and approaches to the educational ideal types. A relationship illustrated in Fig. 7.

*Fig.7 The Educational Spectrum*



Having first distinguished between the ideal types of liberal, general and vocational

education, giving reasons why they should be seen as distinct conceptual approaches to education, it becomes evident that there is some overlap between them all, in particular between liberal and general education where much of the same ideology and terminology is in use. Yet, although they do have pragmatic and incidental similarities, the stronger emphasis must be placed on their fundamental differences; fundamental differences which historically have set them apart. Very different starting points characterise each of these positions. This does not, however, mean that they are unable to produce particular outcomes of quite similar content, e.g. on individual liberty and freedom of choice in individual progression. While it may be possible to hold fairly similar positions on certain issues it is the reasons for holding those stances that differ. These make each of the approaches distinct in their conception, their orientation and their approach to education. Each has something of value to offer. What must now be considered is, is it an error to keep apart the vocational, the general and the liberal in education, as Beck (1988) suggests? Furthermore, is any one approach strong enough to stand alone? This should be considered on both a conceptual basis and a pragmatic one: a conceptual distinction might still permit practical/pragmatic integration. This would allow the situation to be re-evaluated and, where necessary permit ,educational reform that might offer an education that encompasses elements of each approach.

## **CHAPTER 4 - CURRICULUM CRITICISM**

### **Introduction**

The diverse nature of post-16 educational provision in England and Wales means that there are several curriculum models in operation at any given time. These are not static; educational provision is dynamic, constantly changing to meet the needs and demands of the age. Such changes have seen the introduction of NVQs and GNVQs which were intended to replace such courses as CGLI awards and BTEC awards. Modifications have also been suggested for traditional A Level programmes (National Commission on Education 1993). It is concrete models such as these, that are, or have been, significant providers of Business Studies programmes, that this study will subject to a curriculum criticism. The tool of curriculum criticism will be discussed and its use in this instance explained.

### **Rationale**

The intrinsic value of curriculum criticism has caused much debate. Mann (1969), a seminal author on the topic, in describing its value brought the subject into the arena and opened it up for debate. There have since been many advocates of curriculum criticism (Eraut et al 1975; Eisner 1972, 1977, 1978, 1980; Oram 1983 & Ross 1990); however there are also those who criticise the approach and question its validity (Gibson 1981; Jenkins 1978, 1979). It is arguments such as these that will be central to this debate so that its value and use can be evaluated.

The function of the curriculum critic has been compared to that of the literary (or art) critic. This approach was first proposed by Mann (1969 p.163) who believed that it would allow the curriculum critic to fully describe, interpret and appraise the object being studied. Eisner (1978), in his many discussions of curriculum criticism, suggests that to convey *“meaning, the artistic use of language is a necessity”* (p.199). Willis (1975) sees the linkage between literary and curriculum criticism as being useful in *“organizing the subject matter of the curriculum field and of determining the appropriateness of varying methodologies”* (p.12). This linkage has two focal areas; the use of aesthetic criticism, and that of social anthropology (Ross 1990 p.162). Such a combination is thought to allow the curriculum critic to develop a more useful method of describing and appraising curricula (Willis 1975 p.5) whereby intended outcomes and conditioned means for achieving outcomes are evaluated. Curriculum criticism is:

*“a multidisciplinary approach to the study of educational material and settings. Criticism combines and adapts information collection and reporting techniques of social anthropology and aesthetic criticism in order to help others perceive and understand educational phenomena more fully. The function of the curriculum critic, like that of a literary or art critic, is to fully describe the essential qualities of phenomenon studied, to interpret the meanings of and relationships among those qualities, and to provide reasoned judgments about the significance and value of the phenomenon.”*  
Ross (1990 p.162)

The purpose of curriculum criticism is, then, to disclose meaning and illuminate answers. Such meaning is better disclosed when items are selected from a ‘universe of



possibilities' where a single item is related to other items. In this instance this will involve current and past post-16 curriculum models being described in isolation and then compared and contrasted to the other models in question. A complex picture of educational practice and its consequences is then provided as patterns and relationships are illuminated (Eisner 1978 p.202). In this study the focus of attention is on 16-19 educational provision, both past and present. Concrete models will be subject to the curriculum criticism. The models under scrutiny are: A Levels, BTEC, RSA, NVQs, and GNVQs and will take into account a point raised by Vallance (1977):

*"The task of the curriculum critic is to facilitate a judgment that will vary according to educational setting".*  
(p.104)

Different approaches to the 16-19 curriculum in both school sixth forms and further education colleges will be analysed throughout the curriculum criticism. School sixth forms and further education colleges have been included in the study so that any differences in approaches to interpretation and implementation of GNVQ programmes in general, and GNVQ Business in particular, between the two types of institutions can be drawn out. Such a clause was included in the study due to the differing histories of the two types of institutions: further education colleges have experience of delivering vocational programmes (for example BTEC Business & Finance), whereas school sixth forms would initially be delivering GNVQ programmes in a climate historically conditioned by A Level programmes of study. Such an analysis will show that curriculum criticism is *"a generic method ... especially suited to articulating the unique"* (Eisner 1972 p.587), enabling the critic to *"explain certain designs or patterns of choice ... by identifying the assumptions and principles which the designs entail"* (Mann 1969 in Willis 1975 p.6). These issues will allow a variety of outcomes, methods and *"pervasive qualities"* (Eisner 1979) to be evaluated in their individual approaches and then related to each other, revealing and explaining meanings of particular learning situations (Ross 1990 p.263). To explain this meaning of specified phenomena requires the critic to develop what Eisner (1972) describes as *"highly refined visual sensibilities; that is, he must be able to see the elements that constitute a whole and their interplay. ... The critic... directs attention to the subtle, he points out and articulates, he vivifies perception"* (pp.585-6).

Curriculum criticism may well include articulating the obvious when considering the curriculum. Essential and dominant sources of inquiry involve all aspects which interplay with the curriculum's environment:

*"Topics such as the philosophies, intentions, motivations, personalities, and techniques of curriculum people; the roles these people play and the relationships between these roles; and the economic, political, and social considerations which influence curriculum development and practices"*  
Willis (1975 p.10)

The inclusion of the objectives and methodologies of a curriculum must also play a part in the critique. Judgments will be based on what Eisner terms 'Connoisseurship' which concerns the critic's knowledge of the criteria and principles; all of which allow appraisals to take place which classify each approach as a type or within a genre. To do justice to this Ross (1990 p.163) suggests that empirical effort must be based on extensive observation and that qualitative inquiry should focus on context, the meaning then

explaining the phenomena. To do so effectively both past and present educational models should be considered thereby involving historical perspectives as well as current principles; the reason being that established educational practices are considered to provide a framework which promotes understanding of particular educational settings (Eisner 1979; McCutcheon 1981). Willis (1975) suggests that this is done *“with an eye toward developing new (or reviving old) principles and formulating criteria for judging comparative merits and demerits of their principles”* (p.8). Ross (1990 p.171) corroborates this when she suggests that *“critics should discuss the relationship of the findings to appropriate theoretical constructs and other quantitative and qualitative studies”*. In this instance the discussion will involve the information gathered in the curriculum criticism being mapped against the three previously established ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education. The aim is to identify possible new directions for curriculum development and research (Eisner 1975; Ross 1990) and curriculum development.

Having established the argument for the use of curriculum criticism attention should be drawn to those authors that have reservations about its validity; Gibson (1981) expresses such reservations and can be seen to represent this school of thought. The greatest area of contention surrounds two basic assumptions: *“first, that the curriculum can be regarded as an art object, a literary object; and second, that the concepts and methods of artistic and literary criticism can yield deeper understanding of curriculum processes”* (p.190). Gibson’s argument is that:

*“the curriculum is not an art object and it is exceedingly unhelpful to conceptualise it as such; and the second assumption is delusory, disclosing more of the literary shortcomings of the curriculum critics than providing curriculum illumination. Thus, taken together the two assumptions have resulted in a rash of narcissistic, self-indulgent ‘research’ or ‘evaluation’ documents.”*

Gibson (1981 p.191)

Gibson (1981) continues his argument by suggesting three major defects of curriculum criticism: *“its assumption that a curriculum is a work of art or can be treated as one; its assumptions about literary criticism; and, resulting from these two, its practice”* (p. 192).

Gibson is not the only author who has reservations about the tool of curriculum criticism. Willis (1975) also believes that curriculum criticism and literary criticism are not synonymous:

*“the curriculum critic’s task is more complex than the literary critic, for whereas a literary object is static and solely artistic, a curriculum object combines both scientific and artistic considerations and, as applied in a classroom, does not do the critic the courtesy of holding still”.*  
(p. 6)

Willis has further problems with the fact that the choice of subject matter and methodology can be somewhat subjective as it is based on personal decisions. A more general concern is expressed by Munby (1979) who believes that the role of curriculum critic ought to be broadened so that it achieves more than the mere disclosure of salient features. In this study, to overcome such a criticism and achieve more than the ‘mere disclosure of salient features’, the curriculum profiles, once established, will then be



evaluated in terms of the ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education discussed in the previous chapter. This will allow the central characteristics of each curriculum profile to be critiqued against a much broader set of criteria, giving greater substance to the findings generated.

Oram (1983) responds to these criticisms, specifically those made by Gibson. He counters such arguments with the retort that curriculum criticism takes *"arts as a metaphor"* and that it *"is making no claims about whether the curriculum actually is a work of art ... What is asserted is that there are valuable insights to be gained by exploring the curriculum in terms of art."*(p.11). He goes on to cite Pinar (1981) who suggests that we need to interpret curriculum in terms related to current intellectual currents and societal concerns, giving breadth to curriculum criticism. Moreover, Gibson also acknowledges that curriculum criticism can not be dismissed as worthless, when he suggests that the method may yield some illumination of school and classroom processes. Willis (1975) acknowledges that no critique is exhaustive; the critic must be selective about subject matter and methodology, must delimit a virtually limitless universe of possibilities (p.6). He goes on to suggest that the value of curriculum criticism lies in its ability to reorientate theoretical perspectives. Additionally it allows consideration to be given to developing understanding about educational processes. It also has the ability to present the possibility of continuous discovery of new meanings in educational situations (Mann 1969 p.33); a point which holds true in the present environment where recent years have seen many educational reforms.

### **Curriculum Profiles**

The educational models to be subjected to the curriculum criticism are:- GCE A Levels, BTEC Diploma courses, RSA examinations and NVQ and GNVQ programmes that are accredited by NCVQ. There will be a focus on the field of Business Studies; this area will be used as an exemplar so that the findings can be made generalisable. The field of Business Studies was selected for two primary reasons: firstly, GNVQ Business was among the first group of GNVQs to be set up in 1992 which means that staff and students have developed greater experience and understanding of the system; secondly, the vocational area of Business Studies is widely studied as an academic programme at A Level, allowing analysis and direct comparison of perceived liberal and vocational aspects across a full range of educational pathways open to 16 - 19 year olds. Critical scrutiny of each of the concrete models will include:-History, Philosophy, Aims, Content, Teaching and Learning Methods, Assessment, Entrance Requirements, Current Status. Each model will be subject to the same analysis and a pattern of correlation will be developed to facilitate comparison.

### **GCE A Level Business Studies**

#### **History**

The origins of the GCE A Level can be traced to University Intermediate Examinations of 1858 (Kingdon 1991 pp.38-39). Subsequent changes to this examination saw it subsumed by the Higher School Certificate (HSC). Eventually the HSC gave way to the GCE A Level examination in 1951 (Blisshen 1969, pp.1/46). GCE A Levels have



since been said to be:

*“the best known of advanced qualifications, widely accepted by students, teachers, employers and the public at large as reliable indicators of academic achievement which provide the passport to higher education”*

The Associated Examining Board (AEB) (1994a p.5)

A Level programmes are currently offered by numerous examination boards. The Education Authorities Directory & Annual (1996) identify seven GCE A Level boards<sup>1</sup>, each of which offer a full range of syllabuses and schools and colleges are free to choose any syllabus offered by any of the boards. (p.18) For the purpose of this study courses offered by the Associated Examinations Board(AEB) will be examined.

## Philosophy

Kingdon (1991, p.25) suggests that a set of principles which can be said to constitute a theoretical basis for GCE A Levels has been difficult to find, but goes on to identify the following:

*“Validity, reliability and discrimination are properties expected of examinations. Coherence and differentiation are properties of syllabuses.”*

In order to achieve these standards the School Examinations & Assessment Council (SEAC) in 1992 stated that A (and Advanced Supplementary (AS)) Levels should:

*“ensure that students experience the disciplined study of a subject in adequate breadth, balance and depth;  
specify learning and assessment requirements in sufficient details to secure the rigour of study expected in advanced level work; .....  
provide a sufficient basis for further study at degree level or equivalent.”*  
(p. 3)

Such criteria have come to mean that GCE A Levels are seen as the “gateway to higher education” (Low 1991) for what is seen as the “high ability group” (Department of Education & Science (DES) 1988).

## Aims

The aim of the Business Studies GCE A Level is to make the candidates think about business in a ‘critical’ manner, examining both favourable and unfavourable aspects. It is not intended to be vocational. The specific aims, as set down by the AEB for 1995/6 academic year, are:

*“1. To enable students to examine critically the aims, objectives and practices of business organisations from their economic, environmental and social aspects. Candidates will be expected to consider these problems from the point of view of the nation, the local community, industry, the proprietors, management and employees of industry and consumers.*

*2. To enable students to become familiar with the breadth and depth of business by a study of the integrated nature of business problems, allowing them to develop their skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis in a business setting.”*  
(AEB 1994a p.10)

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<sup>1</sup> Listing of the GCE boards, as identified in The Education Authorities Directory & Annual (1996) can be found in appendix 1

## Content

The AEB (1994a) states that the syllabus is designed to indicate what will be examined and was drawn up to emphasise certain aspects:

- “(a) *the diverse nature of business enterprise;*
- “(b) *the ever changing character of business;*
- “(c) *the interdependence of the various parts of the business world and of business itself with society and economies both national and international.”*

(p. 10)

Sections one to five of the syllabus<sup>2</sup> are concerned with major areas of Business Studies. The sixth is concerned with the integration of Business Studies knowledge. The recommendation is that a range of sources of business information should be used, not merely text books. The examples given are: case studies, projects or visits to business firms.

## Teaching and Learning Methods

A GCE A Level course, normally, is two years in duration which culminates in a terminal examination. GCE subjects are usually regarded as free standing courses; candidates following a GCE A Level programme generally study a two or three-subject curriculum.

The AEB, in the syllabus for 1996 examinations, recommend that, in the teaching and learning of the Business Studies syllabus, the use of case studies, projects and visits should be implemented wherever possible. The use of text-books alone is not seen as the way to progress. However, in 1994 the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) published its findings of a national survey regarding A and AS qualifications. This report acknowledges that in the ‘best lessons’ interest and motivation were maintained. This was attributed to current, well prepared material, involving group and individual work, working examples and experiences. But:

*“much of the teaching, although sound, was often dull. Students were required to listen or take notes for long periods at a time and their interest was hard to maintain, especially in lessons of 3 hours or more when there was insufficient variety in the teaching methods used.”*

FEFC (1994 pp.16-17)

There was a predominant use of text-books and dictation was noted to be used to excess. Geen (1994) suggests that students become adept in note taking, essay writing and very little else. The use of visual aids, to stimulate the students, was found to be lacking, as were, in the majority, group work and discussions. Low (1991) identifies the main teaching and learning methods in GCE A Level programmes as being dominated by sustained reading, memorising and revision and based heavily on theoretical aspects of a given subject, to the detriment of the practical application of knowledge. Didactic teaching and learning methods such as these imply that the focus of attention is with the teacher, and not the student.

## Assessment

The SEAC in 1992 (p.4), when considering the assessment of A and AS Levels, stress

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<sup>2</sup> The AEB Syllabus for 1996 Examinations can be found in appendix 2

that such assessment should:

*“be consistent, valid and reliable .....  
be predominately by means of externally assessed terminal  
examinations.  
require any internally assessed coursework to be externally moderated and,  
in most subjects, limited to a maximum of 20 per cent of the total available  
marks.”*

The AEB (1994a pp.14-15) in the 1996 examination syllabus identifies five main assessment objectives. These objectives are:

- “(a) Knowledge
  - (i) of accepted terminology in the business environment;*
  - (ii) of facts relating to business organisations;*
  - (iii) of methods used in inquiring or decision making;*
  - (iv) of the constraints on business.**
- (b) Comprehension - the ability
  - (i) to understand and interpret information in verbal or numerical form;*
  - (ii) to recognise errors and fallacies.**
- (c) Application - the ability to apply known principles in an unfamiliar situation.*
- (d) Analysis - the ability
  - (i) to distinguish between statements based on evidence and those based on hypothesis;*
  - (ii) to examine the implications of complex and changing situations in business.**
- (e) Synthesis and Evaluation - the ability
  - (i) to assess information from a variety of sources;*
  - (ii) to evaluate and draw conclusions consistent with given information.”**

The assessment involves two papers, each of which has a weighting of 50%. Paper one consists of structured questions presented as tables, statistics, diagrams and words. All questions must be answered. The time allotted is 1 hour and 30 minutes. Paper two has two sections (A and B), each worth 25%. Section A consists of compulsory structured questions using case study material, of which Section 6 of the syllabus plays an integral part. Section B suggests three free response essay questions - only one of which must be answered. The amount of time allotted for paper two is 1 hour and 45 minutes.

The skills matrix adopted by the AEB is as follows:

	Paper 1	Paper 2	Exam
	%	%	%
Knowledge & Comprehension	22	13	35
Application & Analysis	20	20	40
Synthesis & Evaluation	8	17	25
All Skills	50	50	100

The AEB, in the Chief Examiners' Report of 1994, suggests that paper one tests lower order skills; factual recall is the requirement, whilst paper two tests higher order skills; skills of analysis and evaluation are stressed.



With-regard to coursework explicit parameters, marking criteria and instructions are specified for provisional marking schemes.

*"The parameters will define the scale and nature of tasks that are acceptable; the marking criteria must require the specified assessment objectives to be fully addressed".*  
SCAA 1994 p.19

SCAA suggest that exemplar tasks and marking schemes are normally provided by the examining board, all of which will meet the defined parameters and criteria. Where such assistance is not provided explicit guidelines and direction is required on the behalf of the examining board.

The grading of GCE material involves a number of personnel from both the institution and the examining board: teachers, with regard to coursework, are required to *"show clearly how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria defined in the syllabus"* (SCAA 1994 p.20); SCAA (1994) also identifies that, for the purposes of assessment and moderation of A Level material, a grading team from the examining board would include: a Principal Moderator, an Assistant Principal Moderator, Team Leaders, a Chief Examiner and an Examining Board Officer (p.19). Such a committee would check *"that the required standards are brought to bear in each examination component and in the examination as a whole"*; and *"recommend mark boundaries for each grade in the examination as a whole"* (SCAA 1994 p.25). Such stringent criteria and moderation in the grading of A Levels is a crucial aspect of their credibility in HE.

### **Entrance Requirements**

The most common entry requirements for full-time students are four or five GCSE (General Certificate of School Education) passes at grade C or above.

### **Current Status**

The summer examinations of 1995 saw 17, 178 students sit the AEB A Level Business Studies paper. The following grades were achieved:

A	8.6%
B	13%
C	17.5%
D	19.2%
E	17.2%

The current practice for the AEB A Level in Business Studies is set to change in September 1997; the course is to be modularised with students sitting examinations throughout the academic year as opposed to the single examination sessions at the end of the two year course. Such a change will bring them closer to the structure of GNVQ and allow further comparisons to be made.

A national survey report by the FEFC in 1994 highlighted a number of important issues, in terms of both their strengths and weaknesses, with regard to A Level provision. Strengths were seen to include the fact that A and AS Level qualifications are well known and widely recognised; that they provide a generally accepted qualification for higher education progression, that they provide the opportunity for in-depth study of a

single subject (of which a wide range of subjects are available) and that some high-quality work was seen to be produced in a range of subjects.

Areas of concern in the current GCE A Level system that were highlighted, and which are relevant to this study can be summarised as follows:

- \* there is a tendency towards narrowness due to the focus on two or three subjects . This issue is seen to be further compounded by a lack of integration of cross curricular subjects and insufficient attention being paid to Key Skills development. The general areas of concern were those of literacy, information technology and mathematics, none of which are explicitly required by GCE syllabuses
- \* the narrow range of teaching and learning methods. Geen (1994) suggests that this leads to the candidate being able to recall factual data and to analyse problems. The ability to apply such knowledge to practical situations is questioned as is the ability to justify the conclusions drawn. Such emphasis has led to an abstract academic programme that is not related to the world of work; this excludes much vocationally relevant material
- \* although modifications have been called for (Dearing 1993, 1996) in the A Level system the Government still sees them as the benchmark of excellence, the 'gold standard' in education. This has meant that subsequent systems are compared to A Levels and rightly or wrongly often found lacking
- \* recent concerns expressed about the grades achieved at certain institutions using particular examinations has led to a call for the number of A Level boards to be cut. At the current time it is expected that the number of boards offering GCE A Levels will fall to two.

## **BTEC Business & Finance**

### **History**

In 1967 Dr. Haslegrave chaired a committee whose prime concern was to report on technician courses and examinations. Out of this report came the Technician Education Council (TEC) in 1973 which was charged with the responsibility of devising courses, establishing standards and awarding certificates where appropriate. Alongside TEC was another executive body which was established in 1974; the Business Education Council (BEC) was to offer a similar service for those concerned with business and office studies. Strong links existed between the two. Later changes in the two councils gave rise to their merger in 1983; the joined council being entitled Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC). John Sellars, BTEC Chief Executive in 1992, said the name was important as it allowed BTEC to trade on the marketing of the two antecedents (Page 1992a). Subsequent changes have seen further modifications to the education council. The title under which it now operates is the Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC). In 1991 the term 'technician' was changed to 'technology'; Sellars suggests that this change was undertaken due to perceptions held about the label of 'technician', particularly in France and Germany where 'technology' was taken as

a more appropriate reflection of what the courses entailed.

## Philosophy

BTEC guidelines (1992 p.1) state that the rationale behind the BTEC qualifications is:

*“to provide students with broad knowledge, understanding and skills essential to employment in business in the private and public sectors, plus the opportunity to specialise in particular areas of choice. They promote personal effectiveness through the practical application of studies, enhancing career prospects in a rapidly changing world and providing a sound basis for progression to further studies in higher and professional education. “*

Page (1992a p.19) cites Sellars who suggests that the role of BTEC has been to advance the quality and availability of work-related education as required by three prime groups:

*“the employers because if our programmes are not seen to be relevant to them, we’re (BTEC) out of business; the students or their parents, depending on age, because if what we offer is not seen to open more doors than some other offering then, again, we’re out of business; and the colleges, or schools, because without them we have no production line.”*

Since 1986 additional underpinning qualities of a BTEC course are said to be the ability to offer a general education. This is realised through the inclusion of Common Skills which are seen to be ‘applicable to all vocational areas’ (Hopkins 1991).

## Aims

Evans suggests that BTEC programmes are technician level courses which have a substantial academic component; which are accepted for entry into higher education (1990): UCAS (1994) identify half of those students applying for higher education courses (with a BTEC/SCOTVEC background) received offers of a place: 4,790 students were accepted onto Business & Administration degree programmes for 1994 commencement, and a further 4,064 were accepted onto HND courses in Business & Administration out of a total of 16, 464 applications.

BTEC (1996), in a ‘destinations’ survey, identifies that of those students (from a sample size of 4,117 students) completing their BTEC National Diploma in 1994 approximately 39% went onto full-time employment, with 7% registering as unemployed (compared to an average of 38% and 5% respectively for all BTEC Diploma courses).

BTEC programmes have a hierarchical structure - the First award, the National award and the Higher National award. There are two qualifications at each level, Certificate and Diploma; the Certificate is followed by part-time students, the Diploma requires more modules to be studied but can be followed on a part-time or full-time basis. General aims include:

*“to develop vocational skills, knowledge and understanding which enable learners to be competent and immediately effective in employment organisations in the public and private sectors;*

*to provide a foundation for a range of careers and the ability to transfer skills to different working environments;*



*to provide a basis for and encourage progression to further studies;*

*to assist learners to be flexible in response to the changing demands of business and society;*

*to enhance learner' motivation and provide the opportunity for the development of personal qualities relevant to supervisory and managerial work;*

*to promote in learners a positive and dynamic approach towards working in business and the public sector."*

Evans (1990 p.3)

It is abilities such as these that are deemed important to provide the student with an intellectual challenge, in developing transferable skills which are applicable to all aspects of working life and in helping the student to adapt to the changing and dynamic requirements of industry and achieving success (BTEC 1985).

## **Content**

The subject content<sup>3</sup> varies according to the level of BTEC Diploma sought. In 1993(a) BTEC identified the programme content for a BTEC First Diploma in Business & Finance as having four compulsory subjects and four optional subjects. In a BTEC National Programme in Business & Finance (1993b) all programmes contain *Working in Organisations*. This is made up of eight compulsory subjects. There are then a number of optional subjects available; four in the National Certificate and eight in the National Diploma.

In addition to all of these each BTEC programme aims to develop a range of general, transferable skills. These skills are termed 'Common Skills' and cover such areas as: self-development; learning and studying; self-management and organisation; working with others; communicating; information seeking and analysis; numeracy; practical skills; skills associated with science and technology; and design skills (Warren 1988).

## **Teaching and Learning Methods**

BTEC, when discussing the delivery of a programme focuses on the importance of an interdisciplinary approach (BTEC 1985 pp.12-13 &19-20) by delivering the core subjects as a logical whole and using a student centred approach.

Learning situations are geared toward a learner-oriented approach. At the front of this approach is the concern to develop personal qualities and moral attributes whilst also promoting interactive and social skills (Hopkins 1986). The use of case studies, role plays and other simulated teaching methods is deemed essential, along with group discussions, ie: 'brainstorming', developing links with industry (work experience placements, observations and local industry sponsorships) and drawing on personal experiences. Both individual and group work are to be utilised, as are a variety of communication methods, ie: report writing, oral presentations and group debates (BTEC 1985 p.13).

## **Assessment**

BTEC (1985 p.27), as moderators of BTEC Diplomas rather than examiners, identifies

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<sup>3</sup> BTEC Business & Finance content listings can be found in appendix 3

their key principles of assessment as:

*“assessment should be related to the aims of the course as a whole and to the objectives of individual course components.*

*assessment should confirm learning outcomes and should not dominate the learning process.”*

BTEC specifies that all assignments must have validity and reliability and should have utility - be convenient, flexible and cost-effective. Validity and reliability are believed to be crucial to the effectiveness and credibility of the assessment; as such they should not be sacrificed to utility (BTEC 1992 p.19). Assessment requirements are as follows:

*“all core and option units will be assessed by a mixture of in-course assignments and a terminal examination assignment. all General Objectives must be assessed in-course and/or by the examination assignment*

*there will be an assessment of attainment in the skills element in each of the year of study*

*one grade will be awarded for each unit in each year of the course. There will also be one grade awarded for skills attainment ... There will be no overall grade given to the Certificate of Diploma*

*the level of attainment achieved by a student in each separately assessed part of the course will be indicated by one of the following grades:*

*\* Distinction*

*\* Merit*

*\* Pass*

*students who do not achieve a pass grade will be either Referred or Failed.”*  
BTEC (1985 p. 27)

A range of methods is implemented in the assessment of a BTEC programme where greater focus is given to tasks, making the BTEC Diploma programmes complex both in their execution and in their assessment. Such methods can include assignments, projects, case studies, practical exercises and examinations. The inclusion of practical assignments and problem solving are central to BTEC programmes. Much of the assessment can be carried out in a work situation or in a model office. Projects, case studies and role play activities are recommended. Past experience (accreditation of prior learning (APL)) can also be assessed and can count towards the final qualification (BTEC 1993a & b). The method of assessment chosen is left to the centre and should reflect the value of both the product and the process that has been employed in the completion of the assignment. In assessment both formal and informal appraisal and observation methods are considered appropriate. All forms of assessment have the potential to contribute to the final assessment and may be kept in a portfolio, diary, logbook or other record. Common skills are assessed in each assignment if appropriate.

Assessment material is written, designed and marked by the lecturer. It is moderated by a visiting BTEC moderator. However, this system has raised doubts about its reliability and its ability to attest to a national standard.

### **Entrance Requirements**

To gain access on to the BTEC First Diploma in Business & Finance potential *“students should be at least 16. Formal qualifications, such as GCSEs, are not required for entry, but students should have a basic level of education needed to enable them to*



*cope with the programme. The college or school running the programme makes the final decision on admissions.” (BTEC 1993a).*

To gain accession to the BTEC National Programme in Business & Finance the student should again be at least 16. Formal qualifications are not required for entry but the programme will be most suitable for students who have:

*“\* a BTEC first qualification in a relevant subject, or  
\* four GCSEs at grade C or above, or  
\* a relevant work experience in employment.”*  
BTEC (1993b p.1)

The college or school running the programme makes the final decision on admissions.

### **Current Status**

The academic year of 1992-93 saw the introduction of GNVQs. The field of Business was one of the first areas to transfer over to the GNVQ system in 1992. The EDEXCEL (Educational Excellence) Foundation, created through the merger of BTEC and London Examinations, identifies that in 1995 the number of centres with BTEC First Diploma/National Diploma Business & Finance registrations equalled 54, compared to 944 centres with GNVQ Intermediate/Advanced registrations.

Where centres offered the BTEC First Diploma and National Diploma in Business & Finance for 1995/1996, 86 and 866 students were registered respectively. As a point of interest, in the academic year 1992/1993, as the GNVQ Business was coming on line and in the pilot stage, a total of 17,336 students were registered for the BTEC First Diploma in Business & Finance and a further 23,602 for the National Diploma Business & Finance - figures that have steadily declined with the rise of GNVQ registrations.

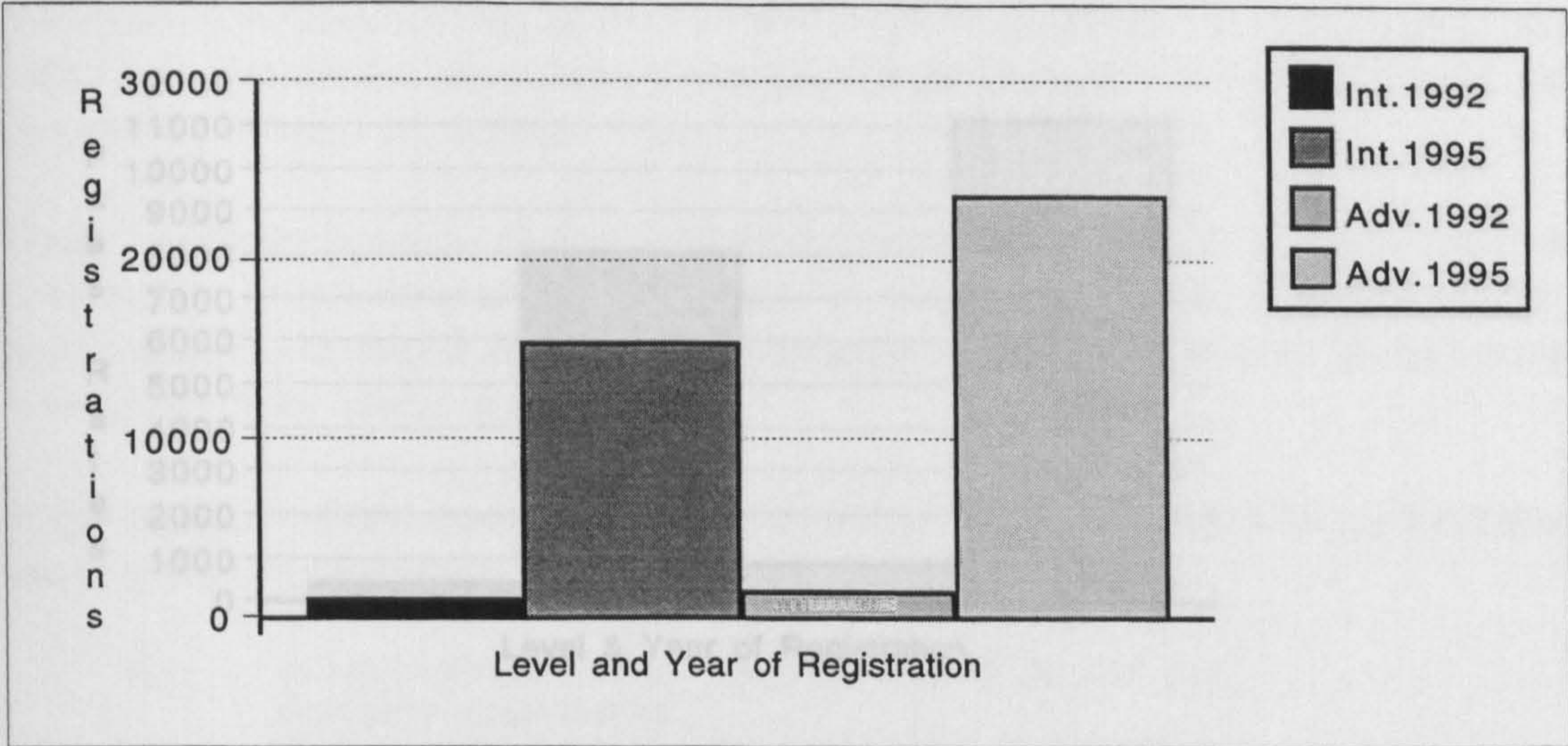
BTEC GNVQ registrations from the 944 centres were identified as follows:

- \* for 1995/1996:- 15,411 students were registered for the GNVQ Business at Intermediate Level - of which 8,111 awards were issued
- \* for 1995/1996:- 23,651 students were registered for the GNVQ Business at Advanced Level. For 1994/1995 24,441 students were registered - of which 11,200 awards were issued in 1996 for completion of the Advanced Level GNVQ which is normally two years in duration.

The number of students being registered for a BTEC GNVQ Business programme has risen steadily over the last four years. Figures given for 1992/1993 registration show that 901 students were registered for a GNVQ Business at Intermediate Level; 506 achieved the award in that year. By comparison 1,581 student registered for the GNVQ Advanced award in Business, on average a two year programme. The number of students achieving the award in 1994 amounted to 920. Both Intermediate and Advanced Level GNVQ Business can be seen to have experienced a growth in take up rates when compare with registrations for 1995/1996.



Fig.8 BTEC GNVQ Business Registrations



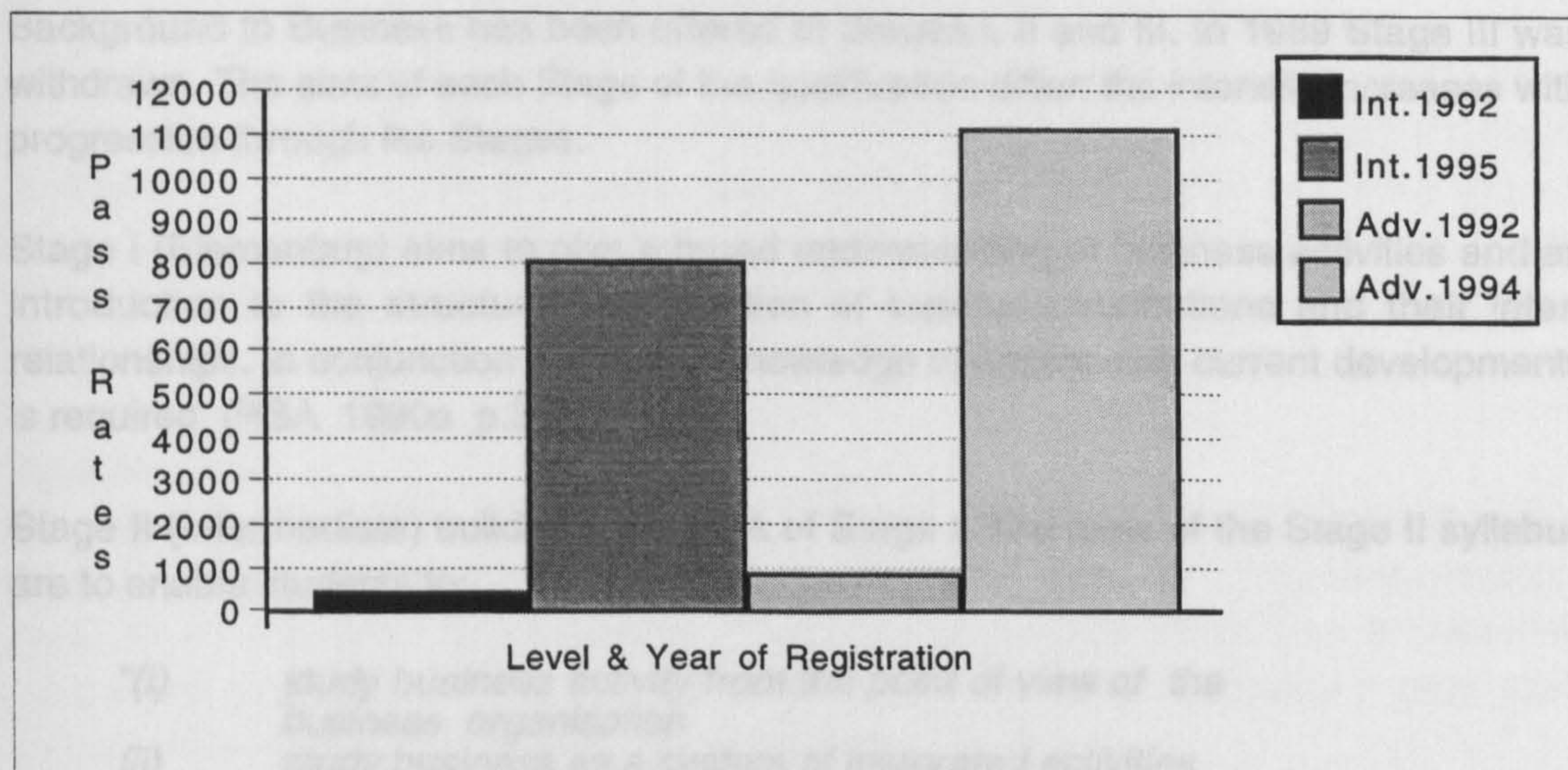
The number of awards issued differs dependent on the level of study. For example: the Intermediate Level GNVQ Business has seen a growth that is in relative proportion with the growth in registration:-

\* approximately half of the students registered for the GNVQ Intermediate Business programmes achieved the award. For example: 506 awards of GNVQ Intermediate Business from 901 registrations in 1992/1993 equates to an achievement rate of 56%; whereas 8,111 awards from 15,411 registrations, for the same group, equates to an achievement rate of 53% for 1995/1996. These figures are based on the assumption that the period of study has been one academic year. A point which must also be acknowledged is that some students could possibly have achieved the award in subsequent years, due to the open-ended nature of GNVQ programmes: the 53% achievement rate for 1995/1996 could have been contributed to by previous years' entrants.

\* at Advanced Level: assuming that students have taken the expected two year period to complete the programme, of the 24,441 students registered in 1994/1995 for the GNVQ Advanced in Business, 11,200 awards were issued, equating to an achievement rate of 45%. The previous year's achievement rates for the Advanced Level GNVQ indicate that 920 awards were issued in 1994 for the 1,581 students registered in 1992/1993. Due to the immense increase in registrations from 1992 to 1994 these figures, as a percentage of achievement, are not deemed a valid comparison but offer an indication of growth experienced.



Fig.9 BTEC GNVQ Business Achievement Rates



## RSA Background to Business

### History

The RSA is the oldest of the three vocational examinations boards in the UK (RSA 1993a p.2). In 1754 William Shipley founded what was to become the RSA Examinations Board; at this early stage it was recognised as the 'Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce'. Nearly one hundred years later, in 1847, a Royal Charter was granted to the Society.

The first examinations of the Society were held in 1856; these involved fifty-six candidates in seventeen different subjects, ranging from Agriculture to Physiology. The popularity of the courses proved itself; by 1929 the Society had 100, 000 entries. By this time the Society has become the Royal Society of Arts (RSA); this occurrence took place in 1908, when King Edward VII permitted the use of the term 'Royal' in the Society's name.

More recent changes have included the creation of the RSA Examinations Boards as a separate legal body with charitable status in 1987. In 1991 the RSA had one million candidate entries in over 200 subjects. (RSA 1994 p.3)

### Philosophy

When William Shipley founded the RSA saw as its purpose:

*"To embolden enterprise, to enlarge science, to refine art, to improve our manufactures and to extend our commerce..."*  
RSA (1994)

Recent RSA publications (1993a) suggest that a key principle for the RSA is that people deserve recognition for their knowledge, skills and abilities however or whenever they may have been acquired; the RSA therefore strives to recognise, and guarantee, achievement of national and international standards and quality.



## Aims

Background to Business has been offered at Stages I, II and III. In 1989 Stage III was withdrawn. The aims of each Stage of the qualification differ; the intensity increases with progression through the Stages.

Stage I (Elementary) aims to give a broad understanding of business activities and an introduction to the structure and function of business institutions and their inter-relationships. In conjunction with this a knowledge of appropriate current developments is required. (RSA 1990a p.30).

Stage II (Intermediate) builds on the work of Stage I. The aims of the Stage II syllabus are to enable students to:

- “(i) study business activity from the point of view of the business organisation*
- (ii) study business as a system of integrated activities*
- (iii) understand the need for decision taking in business and the factors which may have to be taken into account when a firm has to decide between alternative courses of action*
- (iv) see business as a dynamic activity in which one of the major elements of change is technology.”*

RSA (1990a p.37)

Stage III (Advanced) works on the belief that *“there is a need for people to gain a broader knowledge of business if they are to contribute effectively to the way in which business operates in a rapidly changing environment”* (RSA 1988 p.47). The aims which Stage III sets are developed within the context of a changing environment. It aims:

- “(i) to broaden the individual’s understanding of business activity;*
- (ii) to provide the knowledge and skills to enable the individual to become effective in business.”*

RSA (1988 p.47)

As previously mentioned Stage III has been withdrawn leaving only Stages I and II in operation in 1990.

### 4.3.3.4 Content

RSA (1990a p. 30) identifies three central themes for Background to Business; throughout the syllabus the student’s attention is to drawn to:

- “(a) the dynamic nature of business activity, particularly in response to changes in technology, developments in marketing and influences of government;*
- (b) the complexity and inter-relationship of modern business activities;*
- (c) the need for decision-making in business.”*

This is interpreted in the syllabus<sup>4</sup> by the coverage of a variety of topics.

### 4.3.3.5 Teaching and Learning Methods

RSA qualifications involve a variety of complex methods: there is a strong emphasis on practice and competence which can take place in a working environment or in a realistic simulated setting. Competence is assessed over a period of time; to be able to

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<sup>4</sup> RSA Background to Business content listings can be found in appendix 4



successfully complete a task once is not enough; competence must be shown several times over. In addition to the competence based assessment students are expected to learn, and are examined in, the underpinning knowledge for their actions/competences. In this situation the use of case studies becomes an integral part of the RSA Background to Business as they are thought to allow the student to practice specified skills in relation to 'real world' situations. Where possible such case studies draw on material from more than one of the units specified in the syllabus, giving an integrative approach to learning.

### **Assessment**

RSA qualifications have a terminal examination. In Stage I of Background to Business this examination is set in two parts. Part one is an objective test of 30 items including multiple choice and a small number of multiple completion items. Part two involves answering two out of three structured questions and one compulsory case study question based on several areas of the syllabus.

Stage II of Background to Business also has a terminal examination which is set in two parts and structured in the same way as Stage I. Part one is an objective test of 30 items including multiple choice and assertion/reason items. Part two involves answering two out of three structured questions and one compulsory case study question based on several areas of the syllabus.

Stage III of Background to Business is assessed in the form of an end examination. This involves one three hour examination paper which comprises two parts. Part one is a compulsory case study with five-eight questions for 40% of the total marks. The case study is given to the students two weeks before the examination and is reissued on the day of the examination, together with a new paragraph up-dating the situation. In part two the student has to choose four out of six structured questions for 15 marks each. Part two accounts for 60% of the total marks.

### **Entrance Requirements**

Stage I and II of Background to Business are considered appropriate for those working in, or aspiring to work in, secretarial or business environments. No formal qualifications are required.

Stage III of Background to Business aims to cater for those who are seeking to extend their knowledge and job potential and those who have, or wish to, set up their own business. It builds on work covered in Stage II which is an appropriate foundation for this course. Past experience from the business environment can also be a platform for study of this nature.

Progression through each of the stages is a possibility. For example Stage I builds on material studied in Stage II and so on.

### **Current Status**

Recent changes to vocational education have seen the bringing together of CGLI, the RSA and BTEC as awarding bodies for NCVQ qualification. Since 1986 students have

followed the NVQ in Business Administration programme which is a scheme established for administrative staff in all occupational sectors where practical demonstration of skills is central. It is occupationally specific and the tasks to be achieved are specified in terms of competence. The RSA Background to Business at all stages ceased to exist after the June/July exams in 1995. The provision of Business Administration became the responsibility of the examining body of NCVQ, under which RSA is an awarding body.

As the RSA Background to Business programme is no longer in operation, and Business Administration is offered by NCVQ in the form of NVQs, it is the current status of NVQ Business Administration that will be subject to greater analysis.

## **NVQ Business Administration**

### **History**

In 1986 the White Paper, Working Together - Education and Training (Cmnd 9823) was responsible for the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) as a registered company. NCVQ was called into being to *“sort out the mish-mash of qualifications and lack of them that bedevilled training and employment”* (Page 1992c p.1). The basic aims originally set for NCVQ were:

*“to improve basic qualifications by basing them on the standards of competence actually required in employment;*

*to establish a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework which is comprehensible and facilitates access, progression and continued learning”.*  
Page (1992c p.1)

NVQs are based on standards of broad skills required in employment. Such standards are set by industry ‘Lead Bodies’ representing employers, trade unions and professional groups and supported by the Employment Department. These standards then form the criteria for the NVQ. NCVQ does not award the vocational qualifications itself; it works with and through the established awarding bodies such as BTEC, CGLI and the RSA. NCVQ, with regard to NVQs, set the criteria in conjunction with the Lead Bodies in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding and the ability to perform in-work activities - recognised as competence; the awarding bodies must meet the specified criteria for NCVQ to approve of them offering the NVQs under the necessary NCVQ name. The first NVQs were awarded in 1988 (Department for Education 1994 p.6). Business Administration at Levels I and II were among the first group of NVQ certificates to be introduced.

### **Philosophy**

NCVQ see NVQs as being concerned with raising the standards of people’s competence. In line with this is the training of more people to higher levels so they can produce good quality products or services is deemed necessary; this training can take place in a real working environment or in a realistic simulated environment. NVQs are about skills, knowledge and understanding are which are required in the workplace and show that a student is competent to do a job.

Criteria that NCVQ suggest must be satisfied with regard to NVQs include:

- \* the award must cover an area of competence which is relevant to employment;
- \* the statement of competence on which the award is based has been determined and/or endorsed by those responsible for standards of performance in the sector(s) where the competence is practised;
- \* all aspects of competence in the award specification are assessed under conditions as close as possible to those under which they are normally practiced;
- \* the award should be free from any barriers restricting access to assessment;
- \* the award attests competence in a significant range of work activities;
- \* the attainment within the award reflects a national standard;
- \* the competence specified takes account of any changes which occur in technology, market requirements and job or occupational structures over the period for which the award is accredited;
- \* the award provides a satisfactory basis for progression to higher levels.

In summary, NVQs strive to promote workplace competence at increasing levels. In order to do this adequately specifications are drawn up by Lead Bodies. NVQ certificates attest to national standards; students with a NVQ certificate are able to specify exactly what they are able to do in a given work setting. Ultimately, NVQs are an attempt to secure a comprehensive provision of vocational qualifications through the certifying bodies.

### **Aims**

NVQs in the realm of business and administration are offered primarily by the RSA, CGLI and BTEC. The aims of each body differ slightly but they can be summarised, generally, as assessing a candidate's ability to apply the knowledge and skills required in the performance of a wide range of routine clerical and/or administrative tasks. More specifically aims of business-related NVQs include the development of:

*“occupational competence in the tasks commonly undertaken by receptionists/telephonists who are expected to take responsibility for routine office jobs;*

*a sense of responsibility for their own work and the capability to establish priorities, take the initiative in the absence of superiors and solve everyday problems without reference to higher authority.”*  
RSA (1991 p.7)

### **Content**

In 1994 The Department for Education (DFE) (p. 6) stated that it is young people doing youth training who usually take NVQs, which are designed mainly for people in work. It goes on to identify that NVQs can be taken unit by unit at a pace dictated by the student or their employer. NVQs can also be taken in a college environment providing they have work-based experience built into the programmes.

The primary purpose of the NVQ system is to facilitate progression and transfer throughout the system. The NVQ framework consists of five levels of competence as follows:

*“Level 1: competence in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which may be routine and predicable.*



*- Level 2: competence in a significant range of varied work activities, performed in a variety of contexts. Some of the activities are complex and non-routine, and there is some individual responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team, may often be a requirement.*

*Level 3: competence in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable responsibility and autonomy, and control or guidance of others is often required.*

*Level 4: competence in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.*

*Level 5: competence which involves the application of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial resources feature strongly, as do personal accountabilities for analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation."*

Page (1992b p.2)

NVQs at different levels are designed for logical progression from one to another and the framework can be entered at any level according to the abilities and experience of the individual. For the purpose of this study NVQ Levels II and III<sup>5</sup> are the main concern due to their implied equivalence to GNVQs at Intermediate and Advanced Level respectively and to the parallels drawn between the GNVQ Advanced Level certificates and A Levels.

### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

NVQs are vocational qualifications which require that competence is attained. Such competence must be gained either in the workplace or in realistic working environments by the implementation of realistic simulations. To attain this competence there is a strong emphasis on demonstration and then individual practice. Competence is assessed over a period of time; to be able to complete a task successfully once is not enough, competence must be shown several times over. The onus is strongly placed on the student; responsibility for competence assessment lies with the student. A student can call for assessment when they feel confident enough to be accredited with the competence in question. Hyland (1994b pp.237-8) in a study of NVQs refers to 'student centredness', 'individualised learning' and 'flexible environments' along with 'workshops' and 'practical sessions' as general descriptions.

### **Assessment**

Students are assessed in workplace conditions and are also tested by practical, oral or written examinations (multiple choice examinations)(DFE 1994 p.7). Demonstration of competence in the tasks specified is accredited over a period of time to indicate the ability to sustain performance to the specified criteria. Competence is recorded through the use of a Cumulative Assessment/Evidence of Achievement Record which is used as a cumulative summary of how tasks have been achieved.

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<sup>5</sup> NVQ Business Administration content listings can be found in appendix 5

## Entrance Requirements

The target population for the RSA in Business Administration at levels I and II are as follows. These courses are intended for candidates:

- “(a) competent in basic skills and requiring certification;*
  - (b) following programmes for adults which prepare them to work including employment training;*
  - (c) on YT (Youth Training) schemes wherever their training may take place (ie on employers’ premises, in training establishments or in colleges);*
  - (d) on full-time programmes preparing them for work in an office.”*
- RSA (1990b, c & d p.1).

Level III in Administration identifies as its target population those in employment interested in being certificated against national standards; those in training - whether full or part-time; and those wishing to re-enter the relevant employment sector who would like to have previous achievements certificated (RSA 1993b p.3).

The whole purpose behind NVQs is that they should be flexible. There are no entry requirements. This means that candidates can enter at the level which suits their needs best.

## Current Status

NVQs have come under considerable criticism; the most public criticism came from Professor Alan Smithers in 1994 who questioned their approach of being competence based. The main concern was that this competence came at the expense of knowledge and understanding. Hyland (1994b), Raggatt (1992), Callender (1992) and Wolf (1990, 1993) also have reservations about NVQs; NVQs have been seen to be too occupationally specific leading to a restrictive programme of mechanistic training to employer-defined competences.

The Employment Department (1993) undertook a review of NVQ implementation. Their key recommendations include the following:

- \* NVQs, alongside the occupational NVQs, should also be made available in modular form in order to increase the flexibility of the system
- \* resources and management attention should be focussed on implementing NVQs based on existing standards (Employment Department 1993 para. 65), making changes to programme design where necessary. Such an approach was thought to develop potential, providing leadership and management styles became more assertive than in previous times.

More recently the Beaumont Report (1995) ‘Review of 100 NVQs and SVQs’ offered a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the NVQ and related systems. Positive findings that emerged from the survey were concerned with the *“development over recent years in emphasising breadth, flexibility, relevance and progression”* (p.34), alongside which substantial support for the concept of competence with NVQs was found. The success of NVQs in delivering competence was highly rated, providing such competence was assessed in the workplace.



However, problem areas were also identified. Areas that were thought to be in need of attention surrounded the language and terminology used, the procedures in recording assessment and the credibility of assessment. It was suggested that improvements in the form of clarity of the systems in use would not only benefit the NVQ programme but would also help redress the way most current standards expressed the notion of competence - which was seen to be in need of greater clarity if credibility were to be achieved and sustained for the vocational qualification systems in use in England and Wales.

## GNVQ Business

### History

GNVQs were introduced by the Government as part of an overall national framework of qualifications; they were designed to play an important part in achieving the National Targets for Education and Training and in the expansion of full-time education for 16 - 19 year olds. GNVQs were designed with employers and are seen as an attempt to respond to employers' needs. Together with NVQs they were designed to replace other vocational qualifications and become the main national provision of vocational education and training. This has meant the phasing out of existing BTEC, CGLI and RSA courses.

GNVQs have to meet the standards specified by NCVQ. Three awarding bodies which offer GNVQs are BTEC, CGLI and the RSA.

The first subject fields to be piloted in 1992 were Leisure & Tourism;, Health & Social Care, Design, Business and Manufacturing. The next academic year of 1993-94 saw addition pilots in the form of the Built Environment, Hospitality & Catering, and Science. The following year, 1994-95, brought Distribution, Engineering, Information Technology, Land Based Industries, Management (Advanced) and Media & Communications into the GNVQ system.

Features of GNVQs, as specified by NCVQ (1993a p.7), are:

*"GNVQs are specified in the form of the learning **outcomes** to be achieved; GNVQs are made up of a number of **units**; **credit** may be awarded for each unit separately; credits may be **accumulated** for the award of a full GNVQ; **access** to assessment should be open to all; alternative forms of evidence of achievement will be acceptable to promote **access** and **flexibility**; GNVQs will be awarded to all who meet the required standards, irrespective of the **time** taken, or the **mode of learning** adopted; ... the award of a GNVQ will **not** imply that students can perform competently in an occupation immediately in qualifying. Student will, however, have achieved **general skills, knowledge and understanding which underpin a range of occupations**." (Their emphasis)*

### Philosophy

GNVQ programmes are aimed at 16 - 19 year olds in full time study. The Training and Education Council (TEC), 1994, states that GNVQ courses usually include studying and work experience as they are designed to prepare students for a range of careers or to progress on to Higher Education, or for both opportunities. NCVQ (1993b p.3)

suggests that GNVQs aim to provide a broad-based vocational education which allows the student to acquire the basic skills and body of knowledge which underpin a vocational area, as well as achieving a range of Key Skills. Key Skills units include Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology, Working with Others and Improving own Learning and Performance. By attaining what is said to be a national qualification students are seen to be provided with the wherewithal to progress into further and higher education or employment.

### **Aims**

The GNVQ in Business is designed to offer a work-related qualification which is part of the national framework of vocational qualifications. GNVQs aim to offer a choice of routes into higher education and employment by giving a broad-based introduction to the chosen career path (BTEC 1993d & e). To achieve this NCVQ (1993b p.3) specifies that learners should develop the general skills, knowledge and understanding which underpin a wide range of occupations or professions in the business sector; the inclusion of Key Skills into every GNVQ aims to address this.

### **Content**

At each level of GNVQ there is a specified number of units<sup>6</sup> which lead up to the full award, the structure being similar to the BTEC Diploma. The number of units required for each level is as follows: 12 Vocational Units plus three Key Skills Units for GNVQ Advanced award; six Vocational Units and three Key Skills Units for the GNVQ Intermediate award (BTEC 1993c p.14).

Mandatory units are nationally determined, accredited by NCVQ and available through the awarding bodies. All mandatory units must be successfully completed by all candidates for achievement of the award; they are externally tested. The mandatory units of GNVQ Business are the same regardless of whether the course is offered by BTEC, CGLI, or the RSA. At Intermediate Level four mandatory units are specified. At Advanced Level there are eight Mandatory Units to be studied, building on the learning achievements of the Intermediate Level.

Optional units are designed to complement the mandatory units and extend the range of achievement by covering additional skills, knowledge and understanding. The optional units are written independently by awarding bodies and then accredited by NCVQ within a GNVQ. There are eight optional units available at Advanced Level; four of which are required, assessed and certificated. The optional units of GNVQ Business are devised and published by BTEC, CGLI, or the RSA separately.

Key Skills units aim to develop personal transferable skills and are nationally determined. The Key Skills units of GNVQ Business are the same regardless of whether the course is offered by BTEC, CGLI, or the RSA. The Key Skills of Communication, Information Technology and Application of Number are essential and certificated at the level of GNVQ studied. Further Key Skills units are Working with Others, Improving own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving.

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<sup>6</sup> GNVQ Business content listings can be found in appendix 6



Additional Units offered depend on the college or school in question; they are subject to accreditation by NCVQ. Additional Units aim to extend the learners' achievement. They may include mandatory units from other GNVQ programmes, come from the optional or language units of the GNVQ programme being followed, or NVQ units. Other related qualifications such as A Levels and AS Levels may, in theory, also be taken as an Additional Unit.

### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

Innovation and problem solving skills are deemed essential by NCVQ (1993b p.3), as are creative and analytical thinking which are seen to be developed through investigations, the making and justifying of proposals for improvements, predicting and planning. Activities such as business enterprise, work experience, work shadowing and business educational partnerships are aspects that NCVQ suggest should be encouraged.

Main features of GNVQs include relevance and breadth in a given broad occupational area facilitated by broad-based introductory courses. Types of activities and sources of evidence that can be used by students by way of achievement include: specially arranged activities in the learning environment; work placement; industry/market surveys; planning or organising events; designing product and services; case studies; projects; assignments; reports; role plays; practical demonstrations; group work; investigation; diagrams and graphs; photographs; models/drawing/paintings; computer based outputs (hard and/or soft copy); displays or presentations; letters of validation; a report of the candidate; and certificates or prizes from other sources (BTEC 1993c p.42).

In November 1995 the FEFC published a National Survey Report concerned with GNVQ delivery in the Further Education Sector in England. With regard to teaching and learning issues the following were highlighted (FEFC 1995 pp.18 - 19):

- \* GNVQs, in general, were seen as well structured: time was allowed for both formal input and individual work with the teacher's support time was also given for preparation for tests and tutorials
- \* good use was made of teaching aids, directed questioning and discussions: both group and individual work was commonplace, most of which had a vocational relevance
- \* areas of concern included issues surrounding low teacher confidence, leading to poorly planned sessions and courses leaving students unsure of their own direction and losing interest
- \* concern was also expressed over teacher awareness of differing levels of student ability: repercussions of this saw students either as bewildered or bored, due to the sometime slow pace and lack of variety of the work.

### **Assessment**

There are two complementary components in the assessment procedure for GNVQs:

***"Internal assessment. The main source of evidence to show that a***

- candidate has fulfilled the requirements for a GNVQ will be that assessed within the centre and presented in the portfolio of evidence, which is subject to internal and external verification. Internal assessments must also provide evidence of achievement of Key Skills in Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology which are an integral part of all GNVQs.

**External assessment.** *To supplement the internal assessments all students are required to pass externally set unit tests. The tests will assess students' essential knowledge and understanding of the concepts, principles and relationships which underpin the vocational area."*

NCVQ, BTEC CGLI and RSA - Joint Statement 1993

Formal reports and presentations are commonplace as is task attainment through case studies and exercises; such information is kept in a Portfolio of Evidence. The coursework submitted for assessment is graded against specified grading criteria: themes that include Planning, Information Seeking and Information Handling, Evaluation, and Quality of Outcomes<sup>7</sup>. NCVQ (1994a & b p.5) suggests that:

*"the grading criteria are designed to recognise and reward those students who consistently produce high-quality work above the basic requirement; demonstrate that they can take more responsibility for their work; and are able to evaluate what they have achieved".*

Grades of Pass, Merit, or Distinction can be awarded. To gain a pass grade, all of the specified units, Mandatory, Optional and Key Skills Units, required for the full award must be successfully completed, as must the external tests. A Merit grade will be awarded when a third or more of the student's work meets all the grading themes at merit standard. For the award of Distinction, a third or more of a student's work must meet all the grading themes at distinction standard.

The externally assessed tests are multiple-choice tests and have a pass mark of 70%. Only the Core/Mandatory units are subjected to this testing. The tests are offered four times a year with the possibility of re-sits.

### Entrance Requirements

GNVQs are mainly for 16 - 19 year olds in full-time education. They can be offered alongside GCSEs, GCE A Levels and NVQs. They are said to be designed to show what students can do. There are three levels of GNVQ available.

*"The **Foundation** level GNVQ is broadly equivalent to 4 GCSEs at grades D to G, and is usually taken as a one-year full-time course.*

*The **Intermediate** level GNVQ is broadly equivalent to 4-5 GCSEs at grades A to C, and is usually taken as a one-year full-time course.*

*The **Advanced** level GNVQ is the vocational A Level. It is broadly equivalent to 2 GCE A Levels at grades A to E, and is usually taken as a two-year full-time course."*

NCVQ (1994a)

### Current Status

GNVQs, in the subjects that are available, have taken over from BTEC Diplomas. For example: BTEC Business & Finance has been subsumed by GNVQ Business.

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<sup>7</sup>The GNVQ grading criteria for Foundation and Intermediated Levels and the Advanced Level can be found in appendix 7 and 8 respectively



GNVQs are available at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels. When first designed it was envisaged that GNVQs would continue on to levels four and five. As yet this has not happened and dates as to when this will happen have not been released. Additional areas to be developed in GNVQ programmes have not yet been announced.

The optional Key Skill of 'problem solving' has recently come under review; modifications are expected.

In the concluding statements of the FEFC (1995) report a number of positive findings were noted. Such findings were concerned with the commitment from teachers, colleges, awarding bodies and NCVQ in working together to improve GNVQs, the positive reception from higher education with regard to GNVQ applicants and the standard of successful students which compared well with students on comparable GCE A Level, GCSE and vocational programmes.

However, areas of concern and in need of attention were many. These can be summarised as the need for refinement and simplification of documentation and general systems, including the tests and internal verification and staff development, to ensure clarity and greater consistency. A further area of registered concern included the call for improved Key Skills (Core Skills) development and assessment in a vocational context.

The number of students studying for a GNVQ Business award, enrolled at November 1994 (FEFC 1995 p.6) was as follows:

INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED YEAR 1	ADVANCED YEAR 2	ADVANCED YEARS 1&2	TOTAL
11,029	19,650	9,344	28,994	42,217

The issue of GNVQs being accepted as a legitimate platform for higher education progression can be addressed by consideration of the number of GNVQ students who actually have tried and been successful in securing such a route of progression:

*"In 1995, 9,555 GNVQ students applied for a course in higher education and of these 89 per cent received at least one provisional offer. This was an increase from 84 per cent in 1994 when 55 per cent eventually took up a place in higher education".*  
FEFC 1995

In September 1996 NCVQ identified approximately 53,000 students who sat at least part of a GNVQ Advanced programme: 9,300 achieved a Pass, 14,000 a Merit, and 7,400 a Distinction grade, leaving approximately 22,000 students who did not achieve the full award of a GNVQ Advanced (8,000 of which achieved less than six units, whilst 11,400 achieved six or more units).

Of the 31,000 (approximate) who achieved the full award of a GNVQ Advanced, about 17,000 students had received offers of a higher education place, most of which were for degree programmes, the minority for diploma courses. Of this group 90% had received

one or more firm offer of a higher education place<sup>8</sup>.

A number of changes are planned for September 1998. These changes will include the shift from the multiple choice test to short answer tests. With regard to GNVQ Business this may involve the use of case studies. The Key Skill of Application of Number will also be tested. An externally set assignment<sup>9</sup> for one Mandatory unit will be implemented per GNVQ which will be internally assessed and externally verified. This set assignment will cover the whole of the unit in question and consequently that unit will not be subject to the test.

### **Comparison of the Curriculum Profiles**

Having created the profiles of each of the educational models in question, they may now be compared and contrasted to each other. A summary of each of the educational models can be found in Fig. 10.

### **History**

The oldest of the educational models examined is that of the RSA, a prime concern of which was to recognise achievement, primarily that which was work-related. Some hundred years later saw the introduction of a different form of education, that which has since being identified as the origin of the GCE A Level was introduced (Kingdon 1991 pp.38-39), then known as the University's Intermediate examination. Subsequent changes to this examination saw it subsumed by the Higher School Certificate (HSC), eventually giving way to the GCE A Level examination in 1951 (Blisshen 1969 pp.1/46). The focus here was academic achievement; such courses were open to the favoured minority. In 1852 Sir Lyon Playfair gave an 'Introductory Lecture' to the Government which considered the provision of education for all. This involved the consideration of schooling for all as well as a focus on education for the artisan. The RSA did not offer qualifications for all of the areas of employment at that time. In 1878 additional occupational standards were introduced by CGLI. Such course provision focused on technical education related to areas of employment. Further developments in technical education came nearly one hundred years later with the introduction of the Technician Education Council (TEC) in 1973 and the Business Education Council (BEC) in 1974. In 1983 the two merged to form the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC). Britain has since seen the introduction of NVQs (in 1986); these aimed to bring coherence to vocational education by working with Industry Lead Bodies to provide a vocational qualification that represented a national standard of achievement. This was the aim behind the statements of competence as they related directly to requirements of industry on a national level. Such courses have since subsumed many RSA and CGLI courses. One of the most recent developments in the British education system has been the introduction of GNVQs in 1992. They have also replaced many courses which were previously offered by BTEC, CGLI and the RSA. GNVQs are related to a broad occupational field and aim to provide breadth in the specified general area.

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<sup>8</sup> Parenthesis: Personal communication, Rob Coward, NCVQ, 11/09/96

<sup>9</sup> An example of the set assignment for GNVQ Business can be found in appendix 9



Fig. 10 Summary of Educational Profiles

CRITERIA	GCE A-LEVELS BUSINESS STUDIES	GNVQ BUSINESS	NVQ BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	BTEC BUSINESS & FINANCE	RSA BACKGROUND TO BUSINESS
HISTORY	Introduced in 1951	Introduced in 1992	Introduced in 1986	TEC est. in 1973; BEC est. in 1974. Merged to form BTEC in 1983	In 1908 the Society for the encouragement of Arts became RSA
PHILOSOPHY	Disciplined study of a subject; a rigorous programme which is a basis for further study at degree or equivalent level.	Designed to prepare students for a range of careers or higher education. Broad-based vocational education based on ease of access, flexibility, general skills, knowledge and understanding central to a range of occupations.	To improve industry based qualifications by basing them on the standards of competence required in employment	To give the opportunity to specialise; skills are those essential to employment and personal effectiveness. Concerned with enhancing career prospects leading to employment or further and higher education.	To embolden enterprise, enlarge science, refine art, improve our manufacturers, and extend our commerce.
AIMS	To develop critical thinking skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis in a business setting. Not intended to be vocational in any way.	To offer a choice of routes into higher education or employment by giving a broad-based introduction covering general skills knowledge and understanding, supplemented by core skills which are seen as transferable skills.	To accredit a candidates ability to apply the knowledge and skills required in the performance of a wide range of clerical and/or administrative tasks to gain occupational competence.	To develop and foster negotiation and communication skills; breadth of knowledge; independence; development of managerial skills and qualities by offering an intellectual challenge and transferable (common) skills.	To give a broad understanding of business activities and an introduction to the structure and function of business institutions and their inter-relationships in an environment of rapid technological change.
CONTENT	Theoretical focus on the realm of business at local, national and international level.	Broad range of business subjects, offering practical and theoretical subjects including transferable (key) skills.	Competence required in administrative, secretarial and/or financial situations.	Theoretical and practical study of the realm of business at local, national and international level - including transferable (common) skills.	A focus on administrative support and external factors affecting the world of business.
TEACHING & LEARNING METHODS	Sustained reading, memorising and revision of theoretical aspects of business. Essay writing and formal lectures are commonplace. Didactic teaching methods.	Case studies, role plays, work placements, projects, assignment, investigations, group discussions and oral presentations commonplace, all related in a broad context to the business environment. Student led, student centred.	Competence shown in work place or realistic simulations. Demonstrations, individual practice, workshops and practical sessions central. Industry led, student centred.	Cross modularisation encouraged. Case studies, practical exercises, role plays, and projects related to the business environment. As well as work experience, group debates, oral and written reports. Student centred.	Practice in the work environment or realistic simulated setting to illustrate competence. Case studies often used to emphasise theoretical application. Industry led, student centred.
ASSESSMENT	Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis and evaluation assessed through two terminal examination papers.	Course work including oral and written reports, case studies and exercises. Plus externally set multiple choice examinations.	Practical, oral and/or written (multiple choice) examinations designed to demonstrate competence.	Projects, assignments, examinations.	Terminal examinations which test level of competence in given subjects.
ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS	4-5 GCSEs at Grade C or above.	Past experience relevant. No formal educational requirements - discussions with the college recommended. Normal requirement are 4GCSEs for the Advanced Level. Below this the students go on to the Intermediate Level GNVQ. Hierarchical.	Past experience relevant but no formal educational requirements. Hierarchical.	No formal requirements at BTEC First level. BTEC National suitable for BTEC First students and those with 4 GCSEs at grade C or above.	Past experience relevant but no formal educational requirements. Hierarchical.
CURRENT CLIMATE	Concern expressed over the terminal examination and the lack of core skills assessment in the A level system. Reforms asked for.	GNVQs have taken over from previous BTEC qualifications in business and finance. Refinement and simplification called for, to ensure clarity and consistency.	NVQs have taken over from CGLI and RSA qualifications. Concern over competence detracting from underpinning knowledge and understanding	Phased out, replace by GNVQs.	Phased out, replaced by GNVQs and NVQs.



With the exception of what we now recognise as the A Level system the educational systems are, in varying degree, related to meeting the expressed needs of employers and occupational standards. The A Level system maintains its drive for academic excellence; this is not to say that the other systems automatically preclude such a drive but their foremost concern is that of education and training related to employment prospects.

### **Philosophy**

When considering the philosophy behind each of the educational models similarities become evident. For example, there are strong links between CGLI, the RSA and NVQ, and there are close similarities between the philosophy behind BTEC courses and those of GNVQs. GCE A Levels remain somewhat aloof; this may be attributed to the different foci of attention whereby GCE A Levels are academic in their orientation whereas the other courses aim to be directly related to the economy and industry. Such similarities and differences can be illustrated in the following way:

- \* the RSA hold that knowledge, skills, and abilities which are work-related deserve recognition however they have been acquired. CGLI also aims to recognise, encourage and assess achievement which is of benefit to the individual and industry, the commerce and community. NVQs have built on what was initially established in courses and programmes such as these; they take their lead from industry which specifies the competences to be achieved at national level, they aim to provide a qualification which is recognised as a national standard, and they aim to promote competence in the work place whereby an individual is able to specify exactly what they are able to do in a given industry setting;
- \* broad knowledge, understanding and skills that are relevant to a particular field of employment are the core principles behind GNVQ and BTEC programmes. They both aim to offer the chance for progression onto higher education or into employment. Both also aim to offer a general education in some form: GNVQs by the inclusion of Key Skills and BTEC by offering Common Skills, both of which aim to enhance personal development by the inclusion of what have become known as 'transferable' skills. Modularisation is central to both approaches in that once a student completes a given subject/topic and has passed the various methods of assessment they move on to another topic area. Where possible assessment draws on examples that are relevant to the broad vocational area, ensuring that the student is aware of, and able to apply, the acquired knowledge to their chosen area of specialism. One of the main differences between the two programmes is that GNVQs attest to a national standard guaranteed through nationally set and market examinations;
- \* in both of the scenarios outlined above specialisation takes place which is relevant to industry and commerce. How GCE A Levels differ is in the fact that, although specialisation occurs through selecting a limited field of study, it is not necessarily related to a specific field of employment or to employment at all. When compared to the above courses which are deemed to be vocational, GCE A Levels are contrasted as being academic programmes which are seen as



- appropriate for a 'high ability group'. They are seen as a platform for higher education and students are expected to follow this route rather than go straight into employment. To achieve this discipline and rigorous study are expected at an 'advanced level' of work which culminates in a terminal examination - an approach which differs to the GNVQ and BTEC system where coursework and external assessment take place, neither of which are summative.

## **Aims**

The aims of a GCE A Level in Business Studies are to develop and promote critical thinking abilities about a range of subjects at national and international level; this involves awareness of environmental, social and economic aspects of Business Studies. Skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis are the main objectives. The course is not intended to be vocational it is seen as an academic course which allows a student to progress into higher education rather than focusing on any form of progression into employment.

GNVQ Business aims to offer a work-related qualification; a rigorous, broad vocational programme which holds general skills as central, as well as knowledge and understanding which underpin a range of occupations from within the field of business. Transferable skills are deemed important and are included in the form of Key Skills. Progression from a GNVQ programme into further and higher education or into employment is said to be possible. The BTEC Business & Finance programme aims to offer a vocational programme which also provides an academic challenge. Skills, knowledge and understanding are those relevant to the the field of Business Studies. Transferable skills, identified as Common Skills, are included in a BTEC programme and aim to assist the student to adapt to the changing and dynamic requirements of industry and working life. Progression can be into employment or into further and higher education. All of this illustrates that GNVQ and BTEC programmes are similar in their aims for education. The main difference between the two systems involves the development of the national framework of vocational qualifications of which GNVQs are a part.

The RSA offered a Background to Business programme. The aim of this programme was to give a broad understanding of the structure and function of business institutions and to give an understanding of general business activities. By doing so the aim was to enable the individual to contribute effectively to the way in which a business operates, taking into account the dynamic nature of the working environment. The ability to function in the workplace is central to the aims of an RSA programme. NVQ Business Administration is also concerned with the ability of the individual to function effectively in the business setting, specifically in clerical and administrative roles; the skills and knowledge specified in a NVQ programme reflect this. The ability to function and work on one's own initiative is a central point. For an individual to be able to do so an understanding of how the institution operates is essential. Such aims are general and common to NVQ and RSA programmes. There is greater emphasis placed on the unity of competence in a NVQ than in an RSA programme. This is illustrated when considering the assessment methods: NVQ assessment is based entirely on the ability 'to do' specified tasks; the assessment in an RSA is a combination of illustrating competence

along with external terminal examinations. The external examination requires that underpinning knowledge of the business environment also takes place, aspects which do not always lend themselves well to the competence system. CGLI, prior to the introduction of NVQs, did not offer a Business Administration course; they are now an awarding body for the NVQ in Business Administration.

## **Content**

The content of each of the educational models has been summarised and mapped onto the chart so that comparisons can be made (see Fig. 11 Content of Business Programmes).

The actual number of topics that are covered in the GCE A Level Business Studies, the BTEC Business & Finance National Diploma and the GNVQ Advanced Business is comparable across the board. The content of the GCE A Level in Business Studies shows that twenty-four principal topic areas are covered. When we compare this to the BTEC Business & Finance content we find that fifteen of these topics are also included as mandatory subjects; there are also a further four mandatory subjects and a series of optional topics. The optional topics cover the areas specified in the GCE A Level content. Subsequently all of the topics can be matched. BTEC programmes also assess Common Skills, aspects of which are not currently found in the GCE A Level programmes, but which have been recommended in the Dearing Review (1996). The scenario is very similar if we compare the GCE A Level content to that of GNVQ Business: the chart shows that out of the twenty-four topics covered in the GCE A Level content seventeen are included as mandatory subjects in the GNVQ Business. There are a further seven mandatory subjects and a series of optional and additional units that can also be studied. Key Skills are also assessed as well as aspects of planning, information seeking and handling and evaluation in the grading process.

When the number of topics covered in each of the three programmes offered by GCE, BTEC and GNVQ, are further compared for their similarity of actual subjects the findings indicate that some degree of compatibility is evident. The subjects that are studied on the GCE A Level Business Studies are comparable, if limited, to those studied on a BTEC Business & Finance course and to the material covered in a GNVQ Business programme, both of which attest to being broad vocational programmes, yet the AEB (1994) states that A Level Business Studies is *not vocational* in any way, due perhaps to the theoretical nature of the material covered. The optional and additional units that are evident in BTEC and GNVQ programmes allow a student to gain a greater breadth of business knowledge and even to specialise in a chosen area if they so desire. These optional and additional units are two of the obvious differences between the programmes and they allow the business knowledge to become more refined, more specialised, but they are not the only aspects that make for a vocational course. The studying of business aspects is a preparation for work, regardless of the mode of study; the GCE A Level in Business Studies must, then, also be seen as vocational.

A further difference is the inclusion of Common/Key Skills in the BTEC and GNVQ programmes; these attest to breadth and transferability more for a general education element to the courses. One of the mandatory aspects of the BTEC and GNVQ



programmes, through the inclusion of Common/Key Skills, is that of Information Technology; it is an aspect that is not specified in the AEB GCE A Level Business

Fig.11 Content of Business Programmes

CONTENT	A Level	BTEC	GNVQ	RSA	NVQ	CONTENT	A Level	BTEC	GNVQ	RSA	NVQ
BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS	X	X	X	X		SALES		O	O		
BUSINESS OBJECTIVES	X	X	X	X		SOCIAL CARE & THE COMMUNITY		C	A		
- STRUCTURE	X	X	X	X		SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE		C	A	X	
- CHANGE MANAGEMENT	X	X	X			TRANSPORT		C			
BUSINESS LOCATION	X	X		X		GOODS & SERVICES					X
PRODUCTION	X	C	O	X		TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE					X
COMMUNICATIONS	X	X	X	X	X	BUSINESS PLANNING	X	X	X		X
BUSINESS DATA / STATISTICS	X	C				FILING					X
FINANCE	X	X	X	X	X	STOCK HANDLING					X
- ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES	X	C	X	X	X	MAIL HANDLING					X
- FINANCIAL RESOURCES		X	X		X	REPROGRAPHICS					X
- PLANNING & CONTROL		X	X			INSURANCE		O	O	X	
MARKETING	X	X	X	X		RECEPTION			C		X
INTERNATIONAL MARKETING		C	A			AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION					X
BUSINESS EUROPEAN STUDIES		C	O			SHORTHAND TRANSCRIPTION					X
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	X	X	X			BUSINESS TRAVEL			C		X
- RECRUITMENT etc	X	X	X	X		EMPLOYMENT TRENDS			X		
- TRADE UNIONS	X	C		X		ADVERTISING			A		
- MOTIVATION	X	C	X	X		QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS			A		
- BEHAVIOUR AT WORK		C	O			COMMON/CORE SKILLS		X	X		
PERSONNEL POLICIES/PRO'DURES			O		O	- NUMERACY		X	X		
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	X	X	X	X		- COMMUNICATION		X	X		
- ECONOMICS	X	X	X	X		- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY		X	X		
- GOVERNMENT POLICY	X	X	X	X		- PROBLEM SOLVING		X	A		
- LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	X	X	X	X	X	- SELF DEVELOPMENT		X	A		
- CONSUMER LAW	X	C	O		X	- DESIGN SKILLS		X			
- BUSINESS LAW	X	C	O	X		- WORKING WITH OTHERS			A		
- HEALTH & SAFETY					X	- PLANNING			X		
- SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	X		X	X		- INFO SEEKING & ANALYSIS			X		
- INTERNATIONAL TRADE	X	C		X		- EVALUATION			X		
ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS		X	X	X	X	<div> <div>KEY:</div> <div> X PRESENT IN SYLLABUS  O OPTIONAL SUBJECTS  A ADDITIONAL UNITS </div> </div> <div>Source: Adapted from AEB (1994a); BTEC (1993b&amp;e); RSA (1990a); and C&amp;G (1988c)</div>					
- inc. I.T.		X	X	X	X						
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT		C	X		X						
BUSINESS I.T.		C	X		X						
CUSTOMER CARE		C	X		X						
LANGUAGES		C	O								
TRAVEL & TOURISM		C			X						
HOUSING STUDIES		C									
LIBRARY & INFORMATION WORK		C									

Studies syllabus. This is surprising; the current climate dictates that IT forms an increasingly large part of any business operation. Not including Common/Key Skills themes in a GCE A Level programme makes for a narrower focus and greater specialisation due to the focus being on a limited area of inquiry; for example, studying two or three A Levels as opposed to a whole range of topics.

The subjects that are included in the RSA Background to Business course are also similar to the GCE A Level course and in that respect to the BTEC and GNVQ programmes. Out of the twenty-four topics included in the GCE A Level Business Studies course nineteen are included in the RSA programme with four other subjects being classed as mandatory and giving an administrative focus. Whereas, if we compare the GCE A Level Business Studies course to the NVQ in Business Administration, only seven of the topics are comparable to the twenty-four included in the A Level programme. A further seventeen topics are covered as mandatory subjects and a series of optional units are available and build on the mandatory subjects; there is a focus on the administrative role rather than an overview of the business environment. Specialisation becomes very specific.

In a quantitative matrix the depth to which each of the subjects/topics is covered is difficult to assess. This may be where the issue of parity of esteem regarding vocational and academic courses affects the level of parity between each of the programmes. For example: BTEC and GNVQ programmes are considered equal in many respects - the subject areas, the inclusion of Common and Key Skills, the teaching and learning methods and the philosophy behind the courses. We have seen that these courses offer a broader range of subjects to study when compared to the GCE A Level Business Studies programme; making the A Level Business Studies programme appear narrow in its conception and more specialised in its content.

### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

The use of case studies, project work and visits are recommended as the way to implement a GCE A Level in Business Studies. However, sustained reading, memorising and revision which are based heavily on theoretical aspects of Business Studies are seen to be characteristic of the GCE A Level. The use of text books and dictation are central to such teaching and learning methods. The onus of responsibility for progression is with the tutor. They dictate the speed at which a student learns, essentially a didactic approach. In this respect, when compared to the other educational models, GCE A Levels appear to stand apart; the other educational models claim to adopt a student centred approach in varying degrees.

BTEC promotes an integrated approach to learning. The use of case studies, role play, group discussions and links with industry are developed as a way of promoting moral and personal qualities as well as social skills. A variety of communication methods are also recommended so that the individual develops both written and oral presentation techniques. The development of such qualities is also deemed essential in the GNVQ Business course (points of which will be further investigated in the field research). They are further extended in that individuals are expected to predict and plan their work, conduct the majority of their own investigations and evaluate their own performance; the



rationale for this can be seen as developing innovative and problem solving abilities along with creative and analytical thinking. The student is seen to have control over their learning and ultimate responsibility for it.

The RSA and NVQ programmes are based on the unity of competence; this governs the way in which the individual learns and the methods are implemented. Practical demonstrations of skills in the workplace or in a realistic simulated setting are central to the learning on such programmes. Workshops and practical sessions are general descriptions of the learning environments. In the case of RSA programmes the ability to do a given task is then backed up with the relevant knowledge and understanding; this may involve case studies related to the task in question. The responsibility for advancement is placed with the student. Once they feel competent at a given task, they can call for assessment. Having shown that they are competent over a given period the student can then progress to the next task.

### **Assessment**

Validity, reliability and consistency are core elements and considerations for each of the educational models when it comes to assessment methods. How each of the approaches realise such criteria differs. The GCE A Level Business Studies assessment methods are predominantly externally assessed terminal examinations which require short, or essay style, answers. Where coursework is accepted it is to be externally moderated and limited to 20% of the total available marks. The criteria that are being assessed are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis and evaluation.

BTEC Diploma assessment requirements involve both in-course assignment work and end of unit examinations set and marked by the lecturer, with Common Skills assessed in each assignment. The GNVQ assessment strategy involves both internally assessed course work which takes into account the Key Skills elements and externally assessed examinations for each of the topics studied. The course work, in both GNVQs and BTEC Diploma courses, can take the form of reports, role plays, oral presentations and exhibitions. The examinations in a GNVQ are multiple-choice tests and have a pass mark of 70%; the rationale for these tests relates to the checking of underpinning knowledge and understanding in that the questions allow the student to apply their knowledge to given situations.

The GNVQ grading criteria are set down by NCVQ who also externally verify the students' work submitted for assessment. Coursework in a GNVQ plays a predominate role, unlike the majority of A Level programmes where it normally makes up 20% of the award. The grading themes in a GNVQ include Planning, Information Seeking and Information Handling, Evaluation, and Quality of Outcomes.

Observations to ensure competence, oral questioning and multiple-choice examinations are the assessment methods implemented in NVQ programmes. The RSA programmes employ a strategy which involves a multiple-choice examination as well as a short answer examination and a compulsory case study. The examination is terminal.

In a BTEC, RSA, NVQ or GNVQ programme APL is also accounted for in that past experience may be taken into consideration.

### **Entrance Requirements**

For a student to follow a GCE A Level programme the requirements are normally that they should have achieved four or five GCSE passes at grade 'C' or above. BTEC entrance requirements are that a student should have a basic level of education to enter on to a BTEC First award. For entrance onto a BTEC National four GCSEs at grade 'C' or above are expected. Alternatively, a BTEC First award will suffice or relevant work experience. This equates to the entrance requirements for a GNVQ programme in that for admission on to the Advanced level GNVQ four GCSEs at grade 'C' or above are expected, or a GNVQ Intermediate award, or relevant work experience. For entrance onto the Intermediate level GNVQ a basic level of education is required. For students to enter onto an A Level programme, a BTEC National programme and/or an Advanced GNVQ, the entrance requirements are very similar.

To gain entrance onto a RSA or NVQ course there are no formal qualification requirements. Current employment and past experience influence the level which would be most appropriate for the individual. The student is then able to progress through the hierarchical qualification structures.

### **Current Status**

The GCE A Level is held by many as the 'gold standard' of education in England and Wales. Vocational courses such as GNVQs have to prove themselves as measured against A Levels.

The A Level system in England and Wales represents the lone provision of solely academic study available to 16 - 19 year olds. Prior to 1986 a multitude of vocational courses were available and offered by CGLI, RSA and BTEC; 1986 saw the introduction of NVQs in an attempt to rationalise the vocational education system. NVQs were designed in an attempt to standardise the system so that students who had followed a NVQ course could identify specifically what they were able to do and this would be the same nationally. Further changes saw the speedy introduction of GNVQs in 1992 and the gradual phasing out of BTEC provision as an examining body. NCVQ became the overarching body responsible for vocational qualifications; BTEC, CGLI, and RSA became awarding bodies for NVQs and GNVQs.

GNVQ Business was introduced in 1992 and has now largely taken over from the BTEC Business & Finance course. The NVQ in Business Administration is now the sole provider of competence-based vocational education in this field, taking over from previous CGLI and RSA programmes. The GNVQ and NVQ programmes alongside the A Level currently represent the three pathways that are open to individuals post-16. A Levels are seen as the academic route, NVQs the purely vocational route and GNVQs cover the middle ground where vocational aspects are said to run compatibly with underpinning knowledge and understanding, illustrating the National Qualification Framework (see Fig.1) that is in operation in England and Wales at the current time.



NVQs and GNVQs are relatively new forms of provision when compared to that of A Levels. They have been the subject of much debate and criticism; NVQs because of the competence focus which is seen to be a detriment to the development of knowledge and understanding (Smithers 1994, Hyland 1993, 1994a &b); GNVQs because of the constant comparisons to the so-called 'gold standard' of A Levels and the ability (or lack of) to bridge the academic/vocational divide by offering a course that can be seen to provide parity of esteem with A Levels.

A Levels have not escaped criticism. Dearing (1993, 1996) asked for modification to be made to A Levels in the light of the 'new' vocational courses; the incorporation of Key Skill elements (as in GNVQs) into A Levels, in an attempt to broaden the curriculum, the inclusion of a wider variety of teaching and learning methods, and the adoption of vocationally relevant material to detract from the perceived abstract academic bias are three such points.

### **Mapping of Educational Profiles to the Ideal Types**

To fulfil the objectives of curriculum criticism requires that, once the profile of an educational model has been established, it should be critiqued against some other criteria; in this instance the curriculum models of A Levels, BTEC, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs will be subject to this analysis as they are mapped against the ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education. The criteria implemented in the ideal type analysis, of Assumption, Orientation, Aims, Method, Structure, and Examples, will be further utilised to evaluate the curriculum models. A pattern of correlation will be developed that marries the main features of each of the education models against the ideal types.

## **Curriculum Mapping**

### **The Correlation**

Having discussed each of the curriculum profiles, their liberal, general and/or vocational education tendencies (in terms of the ideal type criteria) need to be clarified. This requires that the main features of each of the education models are married to the ideal types to illuminate such tendencies. To develop these patterns of correlation the criteria of Assumption, Orientation, Aims, Methods, Structure and Examples, which were used to identify each of the ideal types and tease out their specific traits, are further used in the evaluation of each of the curriculum profiles. Where appropriate the subdivisions of the ideal types are also identified. The main features of each of the curriculum profiles are related to liberal, general and/or vocational educational traits, using the ideal type criteria as a guide.

### **GCE A Level Business Studies**

A Level Business Studies can be seen as a form of liberal education. Although it can be said that A Level Business Studies has a rationalist, objectivist assumption (as outlined in the discussion of the ideal type of liberal education) due to the importance placed on the acquisition of knowledge and therein reason and logic, such a focus is limited to two-

to-four subject areas. Such a narrow field of enquiry can be seen to be at odds with the 'freedom from ignorance' aspects that Hirst (1974) suggests form part of liberal education (itself a point of criticism that has been directed at vocational education in the past). It also has more in common with scholastic achievement as opposed to knowledge for its own sake; this scholastic achievement aspect of A Levels rests easily with the essentialist orientation which is one interpretation of a liberal education and necessitates hard work and discipline - where drill becomes a necessity when assessment focuses on a terminal examination.

The core curriculum and pursuit of knowledge outline the academic structure, method and aims of A Levels. Success is seen to come through the formal discipline theory of learning where onus is placed on sustained reading, repetition and essay writing; critical analysis skills are said to be one possible aim. The teaching and learning methods utilised within such a system can, however, be in direct opposition to such an aim; the direction and pace is that dictated by the tutor leaving little room for creativity or imagination to be developed or enhanced in individual students. The passing of a terminal examination requires that a student must follow established patterns, thoughts and truths. The question that must arise here is the ability of the student to question those established patterns, thoughts and truths - for which there appears to be little scope when the tutor has ultimate control over what is studied. Such a formal approach may be seen as very illiberal rather than a liberal approach to education

### **BTEC Business & Finance**

By their very description BTEC programmes are, or in some cases were, vocational in nature. This was not to the exclusion of underpinning knowledge and understanding and the focus was not necessarily on the unity of competence. The unity of inquiry held greater importance. Such a focus shows that BTEC Business & Finance had general education tendencies as well as those related to the vocational. The required understanding of the world of work, as well as the ability to function within it, provides common ground between vocational and general education. The importance placed on experience in the world of work again has strong connections with both the vocational and general ideal types. The further focus on personal development via the inclusion of Common Skills attests to general education traits which are in line with the instrumental, subjectivist assumptions of that ideal type.

The concern with the world of work and the importance placed on the individual's ability to work within that environment has much in common with the functionalist nature outlined in the vocational ideal type. Such an orientation holds the attainment of a certain goal pivotal; in this instance that goal is concerned with career progression. There are, however, connections with the existentialist orientation of general education where instruction and experience are thought to combine and achieve the best possible outcome for the individual. The role of experience is again evident when the teaching and learning methods utilised in BTEC Business & Finance are considered; a student centred approach is advocated where the unity of inquiry is central. The onus of responsibility is shared by the student and the tutor. Their experiences are crucial to their development and are thought to empower the individual and subsequently allow



critical analysis of those experiences to take place - the essence of which has much in common with the structure of general education. The BTEC Business & Finance can, therefore, be seen as a progressive form of vocational education.

### **RSA Background to Business**

The assumptions of the RSA Background to Business programme are utilitarian and pragmatic where the attainment of both individual and national economic goals are the aims. In attaining such goals, through practical education and training, the utilitarian and pragmatic assumptions suggest that the 'greatest good of the greatest number' will become a reality. Assumptions such as these further point to a functionalist orientation where a skilled and knowledgeable workforce is the desired goal. This is achieved through the unity of competence in its broadest sense which also holds underpinning knowledge and understanding as important.

Training in specific areas, along with underpinning knowledge and understanding, are pivotal. Such a focus can serve to illustrate the utilitarian and pragmatic assumptions evident in such as programme; the areas deemed important and worthy of study are those which will help the individual in practical reality, in the world of work. In equipping individuals with such skills and knowledge the RSA Background to Business course can be said to be meeting the needs and demands of the economy. A focus such as this is inextricably linked to the vocational training objective of the vocational ideal type. It does also, however, have an element that could be perceived as a concern of the vocational education objective due to the importance placed on underpinning knowledge and understanding.

The focus on the world of work and the priority given to work-based experience is evidently connected to the vocational ideal type; such concerns also feature in general education. The unity of competence, however, does equate the programme more with the vocational than the general ideal type.

### **NVQ Business Administration**

The economic focus of NVQs, whereby those competences that are deemed important are those which industry have specified for economic survival and well being, points toward the utilitarian, pragmatic assumptions of the vocational ideal type. The functionalist orientation of NVQ Business Administration, which is best illustrated by the focus that is given to the unity of competence whereby the aim is to promote the ability to perform specified activities, is a further indication of the connection with the vocational ideal type.

The role of experience in the work place is central to such courses as the NVQ Business Administration. This at first glance suggests connections with the general ideal type. However, the role of underpinning knowledge and understanding appears to play a significantly less important role than in the CGLI and RSA programmes outlined above - to the detriment of its general education connections. In such an instance NVQs attract the criticism of being too narrow in their conception (Hyland 1993, 1994a&b, Smithers 1993). The unity of competence can allow for underpinning knowledge and understanding but does not appear to do so in this instance. NVQs, when we consider

the lower levels of attainment (Levels I, II, and III which have been the focus in this study), can, therefore, be said to be vocational training in one of its most narrow forms, or traditional vocationalism (Hodkinson 1991a).

### **GNVQ Business**

The GNVQ programme has much in common with its predecessor, the BTEC Business & Finance. It is vocational in its conception in that it is a form of preparation for work in a broad career area. This initially points towards the vocational ideal type; the utilitarian pragmatic assumption of the practical existence of reality, in which knowledge is that which can be used as an instrument for individual and national economic well being. However, there is also the inclusion of a series of Key Skills which have been seen as the transferable element of the programme - skills which the student can adapt to changing situations. The inclusion of such elements, with the view to helping the development of character and life experience, has an instrumental, subjectivist assumption and existential orientation, as outlined in the general education ideal type. What cannot be ignored is the fact that GNVQs have strong connections with the world of work, factors which are embodied in the functionalist orientation of the vocational ideal type.

The focus given to the world of work, the consideration of underpinning knowledge and understanding surrounding that environment and the inclusion of Key Skills has strong leanings towards both the progressive vocational and the general educational ideal types. The aims of GNVQs (to prepare individuals for employment or higher education) and the suggested teaching and learning methods are to provide a student centred mode of learning. In addition students are supposed to develop time management skills, planning and organisational skills through the required action planning of their work. Such aims and methods reinforce the connections that GNVQ Business has with both vocational and general education.

However, if to a lesser degree, some aspects of the GNVQ Business have connections with liberal education. Firstly, the continued focus on the development of communication skills can be seen to relate to the socialisation aspects of liberal education evident initially in the humanistic objective and latterly as forms of etiquette where codes of conduct and behaviour have become the focal point. Secondly, the option of including the development of problem solving abilities can be related to the critical analysis criteria of the knowledge objective. Thirdly, the supposed open-ended nature of a GNVQ programme (whereby in theory a student has the option of sitting individual units of a programme and can be accredited with them as they progress through the programme and gradually build up to the full GNVQ certificate - a process that can take up to five years - providing the institution in question is prepared to make facilities for such progression); and the supposed ability of students to elect their chosen Additional and/or Optional units (which ultimately depends on whether institutions have the capacity and ability to make them available, be it rooms, staff, equipment or plant) points towards a freedom of choice element that has something in common with the freedom aspects of liberal education.

As can be seen the GNVQ Business is a complex programme. It has strong vocational



and general education tendencies but it also has the potential to fulfil certain liberal education criteria (as outlined above) - such potential that as yet may not have been met. It is questions surrounding issues such as these that are addressed in the field research. Further focus also encompasses GNVQ delivery in different contexts and whether this in fact has any bearing on the ability of GNVQs to fulfil any of the liberal education criteria.

### **Introduction**

Having evaluated the different curriculum models that have been in operation in the post-16 sector by consideration of literature the next stage involves further focus on GNVQs. This will take the literature surrounding the curriculum profile of GNVQ Business and the ideal type analysis of educational models and further compare the GNVQ Business programme to the research findings generated in field research of semi-structured interviews and an attitudinal survey.

### **The Initial Exploratory Interviews**

#### **Rationale**

Competition in the provision of education for 16 - 19 year olds has intensified in recent years due to further education colleges and school sixth forms now offering the same courses. The ability to offer full time courses which are efficient and successful has become paramount to the survival of post-16 providers. In times of great change this becomes increasingly difficult.

GNVQs have been seen as replacing a proliferation of courses that have existed in the 16 - 19 provision; such programmes as CGLI, RSA examinations, and BTEC Diplomas. Intermediate Level GNVQs have been equated to four GCSEs at grades A - C and the BTEC First award and the Advanced Level GNVQ to two A Levels and the BTEC National Diploma.

In April 1994 a series of interviews were organised with those involved with teaching and studying on GNVQ Business courses. The aim was to conduct an attitudinal survey of the course which had then been running for two years. This investigation, at the early stages of the research project, into the perceptions of, and attitudes to, GNVQs in general terms and GNVQ Business in particular, was exploratory and designed to illuminate further areas for investigation.

#### **Structure**

A series of interviews was conducted at four further education colleges and three school sixth forms. The institutions involved<sup>10</sup> in the study represented a random selection from the north of England. One criterion in the selection process on the institutions included in this stage of the study was imposed. This was to ensure that an equal number of awarding bodies (BTEC, CGLI, and RSA) were investigated, to ascertain whether the awarding body affected the perceptions of GNVQs and the GNVQ experience, when GNVQs are said to attest to a national standard.

At each of the establishments interviews were conducted with small groups of students at Intermediate and Advanced level, the GNVQ coordinator and a minimum of three

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<sup>10</sup>Listings of the institutions involved in this stage of the study and the interview schedule can be found in appendix 10 and 11 respectively



course tutors. A total of seven GNVQ coordinators, thirteen lecturers concerned with GNVQ Business delivery and sixty-five students (from Intermediate and Advanced Levels) were involved in the investigation. The questions for each of the groups involved with this stage of the investigation differed slightly but were designed to cover the same areas of interest<sup>11</sup>.

The areas explored in this investigation were concerned with the attitudes to GNVQs of those concerned with GNVQ Business and issues relating to differences in FE (Further Education)/ school provision (Further Education having greater experience of vocational courses when compared to school sixth forms which are implementing GNVQ courses in a climate primarily conditioned by A Levels). The modular and outcome based nature of GNVQs was also a focal point. The aim was to identify issues which had a bearing on the GNVQ experience and which could then be traced back to the educational ideals of liberal, general and/or vocational education.

The interviews were in-depth, semi-structured, on-site exploratory interviews and were conducted with staff and students concerned with GNVQ courses. They were designed to illuminate the issues that were of concern to those involved with GNVQs and their delivery. The findings were to form the basis for further investigation.

### **The Initial Exploratory Interview Findings**

A plethora of issues were raised in the interviews, not all of which were deemed to be of immediate concern to this research programme. The areas that were of relevance are summarised in the following paragraphs.

### **GNVQ Controversies**

GNVQs had been favourably received by those concerned with the interviews. When compared to the previous BTEC Diploma route GNVQs were seen as being a *“far higher standard”*. *“They are ... taxing... better at developing skills for study”* and *“they are more rigorous and specific than BTEC”*. The Advanced Level of a GNVQ was recognised as a rigorous course which required a great deal of commitment from the institutions providing the course, those delivering the course and those enrolled on the course.

Those interviewed identified that GNVQs cater for a group of students that had so far been under-represented ie: those who either choose not to follow the academic route of A Levels, or who are not suited to that route in that they did not achieve the necessary GCSE results. GNVQs were therefore seen as filling a gap in the market by providing *“the middle band of students with a good course. It provides a bigger menu and an alternative which has credibility and status”*. As such, GNVQs were seen to make a valuable contribution to educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds.

It was considered that the attainment of a national qualification had been achieved. However those concerned with the delivery of GNVQ Business believed that a national standard had not been achieved. This was attributed to the fact that institutions were

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<sup>11</sup> Different interview formats were used for the GNVQ coordinators, staff and students, examples of which can be found in appendix 12a, 12b and 12c respectively

thought to interpret the guidelines differently and they therefore would have varied approaches to delivery. The approaches adopted depended greatly on the history of provision in given institutions. Further education colleges were far more used to the student centred approach and found the transition to GNVQs less daunting than those delivering GNVQ Business in school sixth forms.

The philosophy behind GNVQs was seen as acceptable by those lecturers and GNVQ coordinators interviewed. The fact that GNVQs were seen to *“provide a realistic education that is more in tune with what students wish to do”* was welcomed. However, both lecturers and GNVQ coordinators stated that changes were required. Suggestions as to what these changes should be are rather more vague but the consensus was that any such changes needed to be discussed and, if necessary, implemented on a national basis with the backing of those implementing the courses. It was considered that future major changes imposed from NCVQ may compound rather than solve problems.

### **Equal Paradigms?**

School sixth forms have their history predominantly in A Level provision. As such they have experienced *“tremendous changes as schools have not previously run vocational courses”*. In some cases the teaching and learning methods have had to change dramatically. However, the benefits of a student centred approach were recognised. As one teacher commented: *“the student centred approach works well with the students. I now use it with my A Level students.”* The lack of time available for the student centred approach was considered problematic: *“we always need more time”*. The issue was that time was compounded by the amount of administration necessary in implementing a GNVQ programme. This was a point raised by all lecturers, irrespective of the type of institution. By comparison, further education colleges have a history of offering BTEC and therein vocational courses. Further education college lecturers at three of the four institutions visited believed that the GNVQ Business course compared favourably to the BTEC Business & Finance:

*“They are more taxing than BTEC as they cover a broad specialism... They are better in developing skills for study and better numerately. Students will be more highly qualified than in BTEC.”*

GNVQs, in general, were also thought to be *“more rigorous and more specific than BTEC”*. The vocational nature of GNVQs was thought to be similar to the BTEC ethos. Those in further education colleges were familiar with the student centred approach required by NCVQ in implementing a GNVQ. The transition from BTEC courses to GNVQs was therefore not thought to be too daunting. *“We have experienced fewer changes than the school sixth forms due to our experience of providing BTEC courses”*.

Concern over parity of esteem with A Levels was also expressed:

*“Universities will first take straight A Level students as it is seen as the route for academic progression.”*

Employer awareness was also thought to *“require an awful lot of work, especially if they are to become aware of the value of a GNVQ and see it separate from NVQs”*. The progression of GNVQ students due to this perceived lack of parity was a concern



for all of those interviewed. GNVQ students suggested that the old universities would still favour A Level students as they believed that *“GNVQs are seen as second class”*. When students were asked why they chose the GNVQ Business course as opposed to any other course they too contrasted it to A Levels; their responses can be summarised by:

*“it prepares you for a wide range of jobs, as it is an element of every working environment” and “it offers far more career prospects whereas A Levels do not help in a job.”*

In addition to this A Levels were considered by some students to be *“antique, fossilised courses that are prehistoric in their approach”*.

### **Implementation Challenges**

The student centred approach of GNVQs was generally well received by both staff and students. The students suggested that a combination of formal input, at the introductory stages of a unit, backed up by individual and group work was required. At the time of the interviews the students considered that the amount of formal input they were receiving was too little. The onus of responsibility being placed entirely on the student was also a concern. Students identified that the *“level of responsibility is too much”*. This was also a point which the lecturers raised with regard to both the Intermediate and Advanced Level GNVQ. *“There is far less formal input with the onus more on the student... this is often too much for them as they are not prepared for it”*.

Individual research, role play, discussions, industry visits and placements were all considered, by both staff and students, to be valuable and effective approaches and necessary in the implementation of GNVQ Business. The belief was that these approaches should be utilised in order to develop the self reliance, responsibility, initiative and motivation that they generate. What was recognised was that this approach *“does not suit all teachers”* and that *“traditional teachers do not like the negotiation aspects”*.

Lack of time was considered a crucial factor by those interviewed.

*“The increased class sizes make it more difficult for the personal approach as more time is required, but less is available. The two are conflicting”*.

The student centred approach and the increased tutorial time which GNVQs require, means that time is at a premium. Such time was found to be lacking when trying to deal with matters such as these, and when completing the necessary paperwork. *“It is getting worse .... time is always being taken away from us”*.

Grading and assessment were seen as being totally different from the grading of BTEC work and *“not necessarily the right way to go”*. The grading themes (at the time of the investigation) of Planning, Information Seeking & Handling and Evaluation were *“laid down by NCVQ and there is no scope for divergence from these specifications”*. The process was seen as *“very mechanical”* and *“marking the process and not necessarily the content”*. The prescribed nature of a GNVQ was a factor that was mentioned by all institutions visited and thought to be detrimental to the whole system.

The pace at which GNVQs were introduced was recognised as phenomenal and problems were expected. It was considered by those concerned with the delivery of GNVQ Business that it should now be left to those implementing the qualification to solve any problems that were being experienced.

### **Key Skills**

The Key Skills (at the time of interviewing known as Core Skills) of Working With Others, Improving own Learning & Performance and Problem Solving were not identified by those interviewed as being problematic. Reasons given for this were that lecturers felt confident to identify and assess these areas. Those of Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology were the focal points in these interviews as they were identified as being an area of much confusion for all concerned. *"I'm not sure how well they are working ... there is a problem with integration ... and with assessment"*. At all institutions visited Key Skills units were delivered as discrete units. Some were planning to integrate them next year where possible but it was expected to be problematic.

The claiming of the Performance Criteria was identified as being difficult for the students and this situation intensified when Key Skills were involved. It was also difficult for staff, especially when an assignment had to be developed, to cover a specific Key Skill which did not fit naturally into the course of study.

*"Some Key Skills are totally irrelevant and wooden because not all are applicable to all vocational areas... Our main concern is with the Application of Number."*

Both staff and students identified the Key Skill of Application of Number as being hard to integrate and therefore separate. Some form of specialist Key Skills input was considered a possible way to alleviate the problem. This specialist input could take the form of a regular timetabled 'slot', or could be provided by a Key Skills tutor working with staff and students in developing and identifying specific skills to be claimed. In either case the problems encountered in identifying specific Key Skills and writing assignments would be reduced.

This would help the students also, as they, too, found difficulty when trying to identify specific Key Skills, especially when they did not have any specialist input in that area. In line with the above, students suggested that specialist input for Key Skills would be beneficial. It was thought that this might reduce some of the confusion experienced by the students as they would have a clearer idea of what was expected of them.

### **A General Education?**

Further education colleges said that in delivering a GNVQ programme approximately 16/17 class contact hours were allowed per week. This time was allocated to the coverage of the units which involved a wide range of options in a general vocational area.

*"Business Studies is a wide vocational area and therefore a general specialism ... Breadth comes because up to twelve different areas of Business can be studied"*.



The focus on individual and group work, tutorials and increased student participation was thought to be of value. In this respect breadth was thought to be achieved. However, approaches such as these were identified by the lecturers as requiring more scheduled class contact time. This was because it took longer to cover the course material when compared to straight lectures. This was time which was not felt to be available.

*"The student centred approach and tutorials require that the time available be increased, not decreased. .... The increased class sizes make it more difficult for the personal approach as more time is required, but less is available. The two are conflicting."*

Differences in funding meant that students in school sixth forms were expected to attend school for approximately 30 hours per week. The class contact time available after time had been allocated to the delivery of the GNVQ was then filled with additional studies, A Levels and/or personal interest development, an approach which was well received by both students and staff. Students would finish an Advanced GNVQ and also have one or two A and/or AS Levels: an approach which is more in line with that adopted in Europe, such as Germany and France, and which is also advocated by Smithers (1993) in his critical appraisal of NVQs and GNVQs.

The additional studies in the three school sixth forms visited included a General Studies A Level. In addition to this a Business Studies A Level was frequently tracked with the GNVQ Business so that both qualifications could be attained. The general opinion was that such an increased class timetable would give the students a general education - a broader and perhaps deeper knowledge base from which they could progress into either HE or employment with greater ease. Should such an approach be introduced in further education colleges and all school sixth forms then greater breadth in education might be attained. This would benefit the students, as well as the economy as a whole, since students would leave further education with a broader perspective of the working environment as well as the social and cultural environment in which they live. This would mean that individuals would be better equipped to deal with any future situation they might face.

The opinion of those delivering GNVQ Business at the time of interviewing was that *"breadth comes at the expense of depth", "competence detracts from depth, as opposed to breadth, as it can be covered in a purely superficial way"*. It was the considered opinion of the lecturers that the issue of depth would not be so contentious in a learning environment which encouraged up to 30 hours of timetabled activity each week. This was because students would have greater class contact time per week in which to develop subject matter in greater detail.

One of the four further education colleges said that it was planning to adopt such an approach in the coming academic year (1994 -1995). However, the remainder of the further education colleges visited believed that this would put too much strain on the student as the Advanced Level GNVQ Business was thought to be sufficiently taxing when it stood alone. They felt that this additional loading on students illustrated the school's lack of experience in vocational provision. This lack of experience was a major concern for those in further education colleges and was thought to be compounded when

offering the Advanced Level of a GNVQ which was seen by the further education college staff as a rigorous course which required a great deal of commitment from the institutions providing the course, those delivering the course and those enrolled on the course. Their concern was that, due to the perceived lack of vocational expertise, school sixth forms would not be able to deliver the courses to the required standard. This concern was not directed at the provision of the Intermediate Level by schools.

### **Implementation in School and Colleges: A Two Tier System?**

As a response to the issues outlined above further education colleges saw a two-tier system developing in GNVQ provision. The popular opinion was *“that school sixth forms do not have the ability to offer an Advanced Level GNVQ successfully and efficiently”*. Those in FE felt that the school sixth forms should only concentrate on offering the Intermediate Level. Where the school sixth forms did offer both levels there was a concern that they *“may degrade the qualification due to their lack of expertise”*. Further education colleges were promoting the franchising out their expertise and past experience to schools in order to maintain what they saw as the quality attained in further education colleges.

School sixth forms saw the *“gap between resources for Business Studies as being narrower because of the A Level Business Studies experience”* than in other vocational areas. However they were considering limiting their GNVQ provision to such course as Business Studies where they had experience and the resources were available. Courses such as Manufacturing were not seen as an immediate possibility for the school sixth forms involved in the study as the resources were then unavailable. In a situation such as this a two-tier system was seen as a possibility but only where school resources were inadequate to support specific vocational areas at Advanced Level.

Further education colleges and school sixth forms are now both offering A Levels and GNVQs. Further education colleges are concentrating on promoting their areas of expertise in vocational qualifications and the adult environment. In addition to this some are using their proven record and franchising out their experience to the school sixth forms, going in to these establishments and teaching the vocational aspects themselves. The school sixth forms appear able to keep their students from GCSE level and many are happy to bring in the vocational expertise from further education colleges. Their promotion focuses on the school environment being easier to work in, the full timetable, the supervision and the pastoral care. The competitive market has meant that quality of the courses provided, in terms of the number of students successfully completing the courses and their ability to work effectively in their chosen route of progression, is of paramount importance not only to the students but to the survival of institutions. GNVQ courses were seen to have the ability to meet the needs of these groups and thereby offer a significant new educational pathway.

### **Acceptance of GNVQs**

NCVQ identify GNVQs as being a preparation for employment as well as HE. The students interviewed following these programmes had aspirations for both employment and HE. The progression of students in both cases was a concern to staff and students.



Employer awareness of GNVQs was thought to require *“an awful lot of work, especially if they are to become aware of the value of a GNVQ and see it separate from NVQs”*, especially in the light of the disparaging reports surrounding NVQs (Smithers 1993, Hyland 1994). The consensus among the students was that *“GNVQs are seen as second class”* when compared to A Levels. Staff and students noted that *“a value needs to be attached to a GNVQ so that universities and employers know what it is worth and what it means”*. However the belief at the time was that it was not until students have gone through the system that people will start to recognise the qualification. Staff and students believed that status and credibility must be credited to GNVQs, initially by the Government, which would in turn help them to be accepted and recognised. Time was considered a crucial factor here because such a status had to be earned. This was seen as difficult when a course such as GNVQ Business was still in its infancy.

### **The Way Forward**

Concern was expressed about school sixth forms offering vocational qualifications due to their perceived lack of expertise. Further education colleges believed that school sixth forms *“do not have the ability to offer an Advanced Level GNVQ successfully and efficiently”* and would not be able to deliver the courses to the required standard. This was thought to be alleviated somewhat by further education colleges franchising out their experience and expertise to the school sixth forms. This concern was not directed at the provision of the Intermediate Level courses. What remains to be seen is the standard that the individuals attain irrespective of the type of institution attended.

The grading themes and criteria within a GNVQ fall into three categories; these at the time of interviewing were Planning, Information Seeking and Information Handling, and Evaluation (BTEC 1993c). This was a concern for those implementing the qualification because a grading process which involves *“marking the process not necessarily the content ... makes them [GNVQs] wooden ... mechanical ..and prescribed”*. If the content were graded then the whole process might be clarified. It was thought that such an approach could mean that grades of Merit and Distinction could be awarded for individual modules. This would allow for a distinction between students to be made irrespective of the type of institution an individual has attended. It would also help in student progression. Both HE and employers were thought to be unsure of the quality of the qualification. It was considered that if grading were more specific a system of quality assurance might be established and progression eased. Subsequent changes have seen the introduction of Quality of Outcomes (NCVQ 1994) added to the grading themes.

Despite the small number of institutions sampled at this initial stage the issues raised are thought to be generalisable. In support of this many of the issues that were raised during these interviews were also discussed by Hyland and Weller (1994c) in their paper ‘Implementing GNVQs in Post-16 Education’ which makes specific reference to ‘Changes in Teaching, Learning and Programme Organisation, Core Skills (now known as Key Skills) and Advantages and Disadvantages’ of GNVQs.

## Summary of Findings

The information gathered during these interviews forms the starting point for further investigation. To do so suppositions based on assumptions of truth and facts generated out of the research need to be established by way of conclusions drawn from the data .

This survey has identified that GNVQs in general were felt to be a valuable qualification by those staff and students involved in this stage of the investigation. The breadth offered in a GNVQ was considered wide ranging in its vocational context. However, were the class contact time per week increased to allow students to develop in additional areas then the possibility of achieving breadth in a broader context was also thought to be increased. This was considered beneficial in helping to prepare individuals for the multitude of situations that might face them in the world in which they will subsequently operate.

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQs appeared to work well, but students expressed the desire to see greater delivery of material from the lecturer at the introductory stages of a unit. A combination of initial formal input followed by individual and group work would help to develop the students' independence and act as a form of preparation for all kinds of future progression.

How GNVQs compare to other modes of study in terms of parity, equivalence and standard at the time of the investigation needed to be clearly defined. The value of GNVQs also needed to be recognised, as did the fact that GNVQ programmes are not in direct competition with A Levels; GNVQs are an alternative mode of study which cater for a group of students who wish to follow a more defined career path which was said to be *"more relevant to life and equal to, if not better than, A Levels"*. The value of GNVQs will become apparent as students that have gained the qualification use their academic ability and apply it to a vocational area, whether this is in the field of employment or HE.

Problems currently encountered need to be overcome. These problems are mainly due to the pace at which GNVQs have been introduced. Key Skills, their delivery and their assessment, are one such problem. Grading is another. Both areas have undergone changes since the time of the investigation; changes that are also seen to compound the problem further. Should these problems be overcome staff were of the belief that GNVQs would fulfil their potential and provide a valuable enrichment of the 16 - 19 provision.

Differences between establishments, those of FE colleges and school sixth forms, were evident. The concerns were directed to the amount of experience that the school sixth forms had with regard to delivery of vocational courses in comparison to the FE Colleges. In contrast, differences between awarding bodies did not register. The experience of staff and students concerned with GNVQs appeared to be the same regardless of whether the GNVQ was offered by BTEC, RSA or CGLI.

The information generated out of the initial exploratory interviews was then, along with



material formed out of the ideal type analysis and the curriculum criticism, used as the basis for further verification in the form of an attitudinal survey/questionnaire.

### **The Attitudinal Survey/Questionnaire**

The initial exploratory interviews highlighted a profusion of issues concerning GNVQs. The information was scrutinised for its value to the project and questionnaires developed out of the pertinent issues and the generated hypothesis.

### **The Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaires <sup>12</sup> were designed to measure attitudes to, and perceptions of, certain issues. The fact that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions was clearly explained at the start of the questionnaire, reiterating that the respondents had nothing to fear about 'choosing the correct response'. Confidentiality of individuals and institutions was also confirmed at the onset.

In order to provide standardisation in the results specific, as opposed to general, questions were posed. Closed questions, rather than open-ended questions, were implemented throughout the questionnaires. A Likert scale was utilised for the majority of the questions where an attitude to, or perspective on, a certain issue was required. This scale ranged from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, with a 'no-opinion' option in the form of the response 'Don't Know'. The respondents were asked to tick the box which most accurately reflected their response to a given statement.

The Likert scale was implemented for three principal reasons: it is widely used, and therefore tested, in the use of attitude measurement; it is relatively easy to develop; and, importantly, it looks interesting to respondents and Robson (1995 p.256) suggests people often enjoy completing a scale of this kind. This was crucial. Time was of a premium for all respondents and motivation to complete the questionnaire might be low. So, if the respondents' interest can be captured, they are more likely to complete the questionnaire, giving considered rather than perfunctory responses.

The questions themselves were set up in a logical format and placed into one of several categories which again followed logically on from one another. Towards the end of a category the questions were designed in such a way as to form a natural link to the following section in order to encourage continuity of thought and response.

A structured self-completion questionnaire was designed with the view to minimising the disruption the completion of the questionnaire would cause. With such a design it was hoped that a greater number of staff and GNVQ students could be targeted and their perceptions and attitudes to the vocational qualification gauged. The volume of responses would increase validity when gauging the responses to the questionnaire.

### **Implementation**

In January/February 1995 the survey was administered. There was a focus on the

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<sup>12</sup>Different questionnaires were used for staff and students, examples of which can be found in appendix 14 and 15 respectively .

specialism of Business Studies and staff concerned with delivering Intermediate and Advanced Level GNVQs were involved, as were GNVQ Coordinators. Two hundred students at both Advanced and Intermediate Level GNVQ Business were involved in the study. The cohort came from one of two types of institutions, as eight further education colleges and seven school sixth forms<sup>13</sup> were targeted and their responses assessed. Of the two-hundred students surveyed 62% (124) came from further education colleges and the remainder from school sixth forms (76); 64% (128) were studying at Advanced Level and 36% (72) were studying the GNVQ Intermediate in Business. When considering those concerned with the implementation of GNVQ programmes 68% (30) of the forty-five cohort were based in further education colleges and 32% (15) in school sixth forms; 68% (30) of which were tutors and 32% (15) were GNVQ course coordinators.

### **Questionnaire Analysis**

Two sets of questionnaires were implemented in this study; one for those concerned with GNVQ delivery, the other for students studying the GNVQ Business at either Advanced or Intermediate Level. The questions in both types of questionnaire, although worded slightly differently and in some cases extended where appropriate, covered the same five categories; GNVQs, A Levels & GCSEs, Key Skills, Competence, Breadth in Education, and Teaching and Learning Methods. These categories extended the realm of enquiry from the data developed out of the initial exploratory interviews.

### **GNVQs, A Levels and GCSEs**

#### **Staff Responses**

GNVQs were perceived by the majority of the forty-five (45) staff involved with GNVQ implementation as being able to offer an alternative to A Levels which had credibility and status (58%/26) and were also seen to provide the 'middle band' of students with a good course (62%/28). Equally, when GNVQs ability to cross the so-called academic/vocational divide in education was questioned 55% (25) of the cohort believed that to be the case. Subsequently, when the question was raised as to whether students would find an Advanced Level GNVQ and A Levels equally demanding, 61% (27) agreed that they would find both programmes to be equally demanding. With this point in mind the majority of respondents (71%/33) went on to say that they did not see GNVQs as being for only those students who are not suited to A Levels. This implies that GNVQs were seen to be academically equal to A Levels and that they did not only attract those students who were not suited to A Levels. Differences that occurred by sub-group were as follows:

- \* the fifteen (15) GNVQ course coordinators differed in their responses to the thirty (30) tutors when asked about the ability of GNVQs to provide an alternative to A Levels which has credibility and status. The coordinators agreed that this was indeed the case (66% (4) in further education colleges and 80% (4) in school sixth forms) whilst the tutors, although following the same majority, were 53% (16) and 50% (5) respectively, similar findings were generated when those concerned

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<sup>13</sup> Listings of the institutions which took part in the attitudinal survey/questionnaire can be found in appendix 13



- with GNVQ delivery were questioned about GNVQs ability to provide a good course for the middle band of students: GNVQ course coordinators were more in favour of this than the tutors with similar response rates to those outlined above. School sixth form GNVQ course coordinators were again more positive when asked if GNVQs were considered able to bridge the so-called academic/vocational divide. All (100%) the respondents in this group agreed that this was the case whereas 55% (16) was the norm for the other groups.

The issue of perceived parity between GNVQ, A Levels and GCSEs was revisited when the issue of whether one system was considered easier than the other was addressed. Half the respondents did not think that a GNVQ Intermediate was any easier than GCSEs and 58% (26) did not consider the Advanced GNVQ to be easier than A Levels. In both cases, however, a third of the cohort held the opposing view point.

A further trend established in this section of the survey showed that the majority of those implementing GNVQs firstly were of the opinion that both GNVQs and A Levels would be found to be equally demanding by the students; secondly, that the GNVQ Advanced was not easier than A Levels; and thirdly, that GNVQs were not for students who were of lower ability than those studying A Levels. As such it could not be said that good GCSE students would automatically go on to study A Levels, with 56% of the respondents selecting this variable. Similarly, if the GNVQ Advanced was not seen as an easier option the choice of progression should be open, as both post-16 programmes should be promoted as being equally demanding. GNVQs should not be seen as the second choice nor for lower ability students. Actual attitudes again differed, if only slightly, in the different sub-groups:

- \* was the GNVQ Advanced, therefore, seen as being easier than A Levels?: 67% (5) of the GNVQ course coordinators in further education colleges agreed that the GNVQ Advanced was easier whilst 80% (5) of the same group in school sixth forms disagreed with this; when considering the FE tutors' responses a division was again experienced with 41% (13) agreeing that the GNVQ Advanced was easier than A Levels and the remaining 59% (18) disagreeing compared to 83% (8) of those in school sixth forms holding the belief that the GNVQ Advanced was not necessarily easier than A Levels; the GNVQ course coordinators from both types of establishments were again more positive than the tutors when asked if GNVQs were for lower ability students than those pursuing A Levels with 82%(12) disagreeing with this; the same trend was maintained by the tutors but only 63% (19) shared that belief.
- \* comparisons between the GNVQ Intermediate and GCSEs brought forth a mixed result: an average of 50% (22) were of the opinion that the GNVQ Intermediate was not any easier than GCSEs; however, 50% (4) of the GNVQ course coordinators in further education colleges were not in agreement with this as they thought they GNVQ Intermediate to be easier than GCSEs, as did 66% (4) of school sixth form tutors; this gives an indication of the mixed opinions that exist about GNVQs and their level or standard of attainment.

The statement that GNVQs by offering a national qualification are able to attest to a national standard brought mixed responses. The tutors at both institutions were evenly split in their responses with half agreeing and half disagreeing. GNVQ course coordinators in further education colleges, however, were more positive; 83% (7) holding the belief that a national standard was achieved with GNVQs compared with 40%(2) in school sixth forms.

### **Student Responses**

The GNVQ Intermediate was perceived by an average of 58% (42) of the Intermediate Level students as being easier than GCSEs at both schools and colleges.

The GNVQ Intermediate, and not GCSEs, was seen as both a better preparation for further education and for employment, even though it was seen to be the easier option when compared to GCSEs. The GNVQ Intermediate Business programme was seen as a better preparation for further education by an average of 44%(88): 41% (51) of students studying in a further education college and 48% (36) in school sixth forms in accordance with this, whilst 37% (30) did not agree. However, the split in the response rates shows the division in education when academic and vocational programmes are compared, as an average of 39% (78) were of the opinion that GCSEs were the better option when considering further education - illustrating the confusion which appears to surround the topic.

What, then, about employment? The majority of respondents, at 77% (144), believed that GNVQs were a better preparation for employment than GCSEs - those students studying in further education colleges were more positive about this than their counterparts in school sixth forms: in further education colleges 91% (113) thought that GNVQs were the better preparation for employment; in school sixth forms 63% (44) thought that GNVQs were the better preparation for employment when compared to GCSEs, but 17% (13) disagreed and 20% (15) did not select either programme. Perceptions such as these may well give credence to the worries of FE staff over the ability of schools to offer vocational programmes.

When the GNVQ Advanced was compared to A Levels those studying the GNVQ Advanced Level held the following opinions: in further education colleges 35% (30) agreed that GNVQs were easier than A Levels, 29% (24) disagreed with this and 35% (30) neither agreed or disagreed; in school sixth forms 47% (17) thought that GNVQs were the easier option and 36% (13) disagreed with this statement but 17% (6) registered a neutral response. This illustrates that when the GNVQ Advanced is compared to A Levels respondents generally were divided between the three central responses of 'agree', 'don't know' and 'disagree', about which system was the easier.

As a preparation for university the GNVQ Advanced, when compared to A Levels, again received a mixed response: in further education colleges 36% (45) agreed that GNVQs were a better preparation for university than A Levels, 37% (46) disagreed with this in the belief that A Levels were the better form of preparation and 28% (35) selected neither variable; in school sixth forms 22% (17) thought that GNVQs were a better preparation for university than A Levels whilst 56% (43) did not believe that to

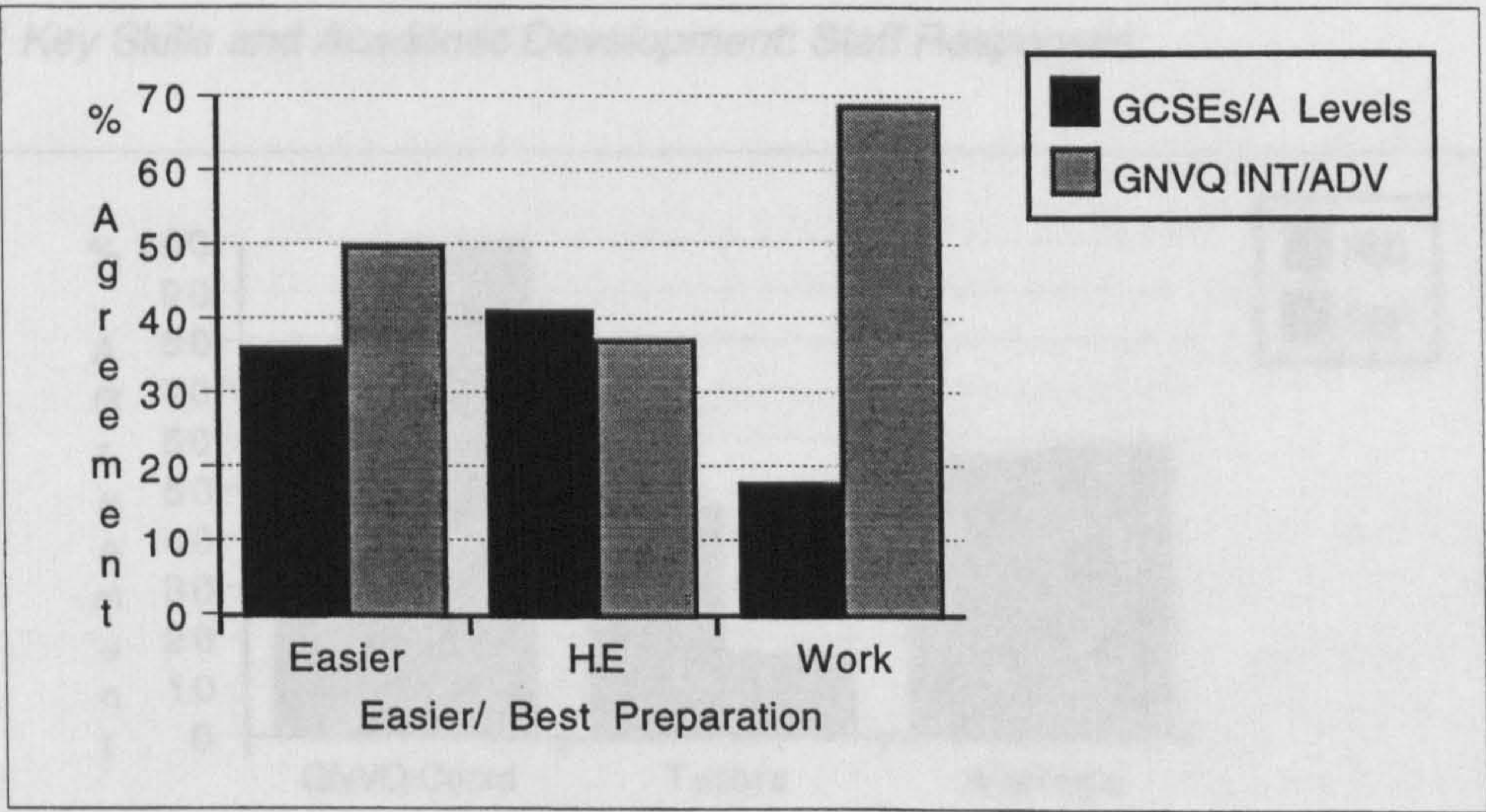


findings generated here were that in school sixth forms A Levels were seen as the better preparation for university; a point which may have attributed to these results is that such institutions have a history of predominantly offering and providing A Level courses whereas GNVQ provision may be a relatively new experience. In further education colleges there was no conclusive majority and in all cases a significant percentage (24%/30) were neither in agreement or disagreement.

The GNVQ Advanced was seen as a better preparation for employment than A Levels with an average of 60% (77) of Advanced Level students holding this opinion. In further education colleges 62% (53) thought GNVQs were the better preparation for employment whilst 12% (10) disagreed with this; in school sixth forms 50% (18) thought that GNVQs were the better preparation for employment when compared to A Levels, but 36% (13) disagreed with this in the belief that A Levels were the better form of preparation for employment.

If the two groups are combined, whereby the responses of the Advanced Level student are correlated with the responses of the Intermediate Level students, the findings suggest the following: GNVQs were perceived as being the easier option when compared to GCSEs and A Levels: 50% (100) of those surveyed agreed that GNVQs were easier than GCSEs and/or A Levels whilst only 36% (72) thought that GNVQs were not necessarily the easier option. Further divisions were evident in the question of which system provided the better preparation for further or higher education: 37% (74) saw GNVQs as the better preparation for further study whilst 41% (82) did not agree with this in the belief that GCSEs and/or A Levels were a better form of preparation and a total of 20% (40) registered a neutral response. If this issue is then expanded to encompass the world of work the majority of the respondents at both Levels (69%/138) thought that GNVQs were the better preparation for employment when compared to GCSEs and A Levels, whilst 18% (36) disagreed.

Fig. 12 Ease of Programme, Best Preparation: Student Responses





Key Skills

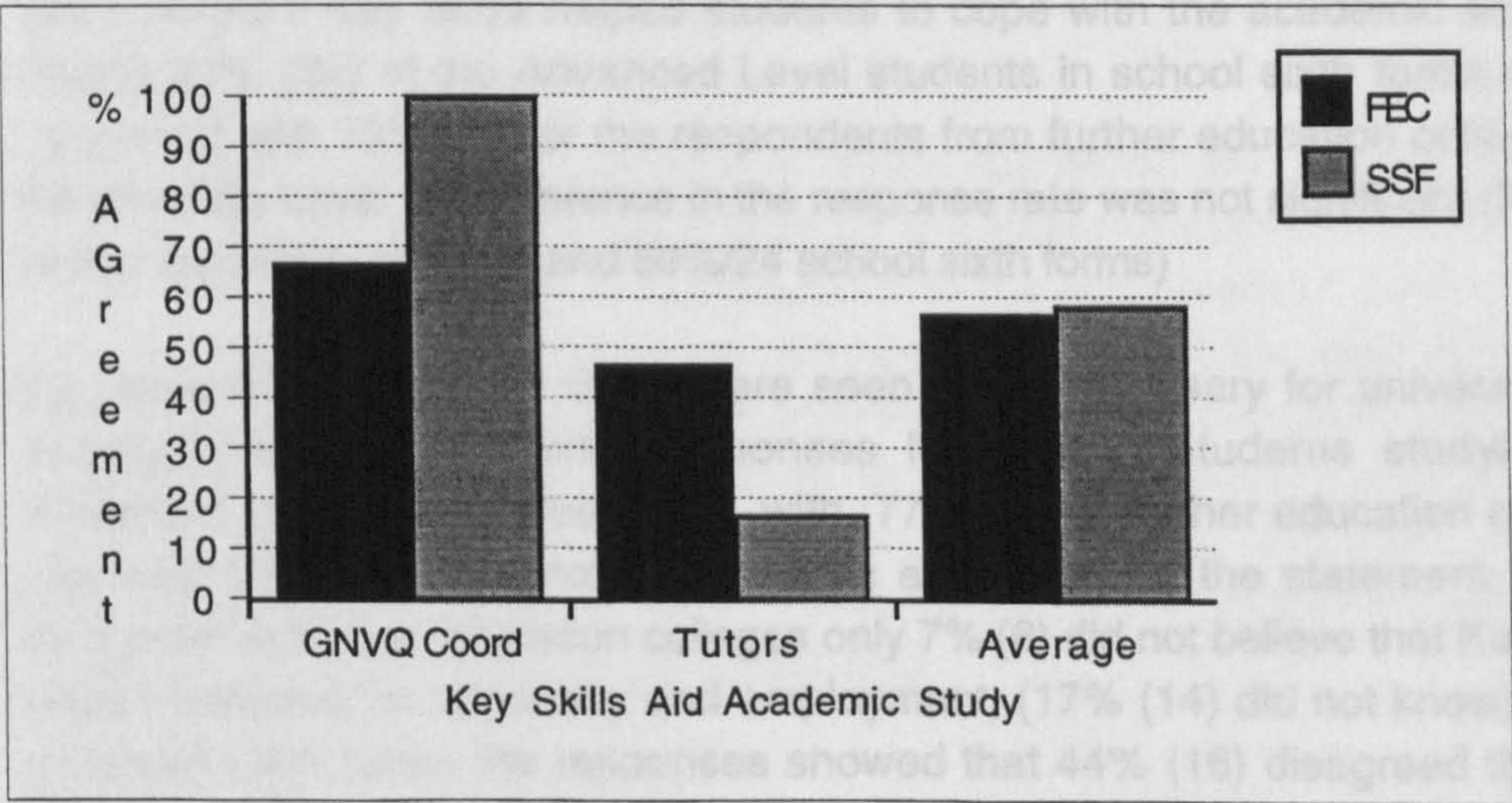
Staff Responses

The majority of staff were in accord with a statement which suggested that Key Skills were the transferable element of a GNVQ (with all of the GNVQ course coordinators in further education colleges taking this stance and 60% (4) of those in school sixth forms; the results of the tutors were 71% (14) and 83% (8) respectively). This gave an overall majority of 77% (12) agreeing that Key Skills were the transferable element of a GNVQ. If Key Skills are seen as the transferable element of a GNVQ then it might be expected that they are also able to help a student cope with the academic side of a GNVQ as they are skills which students should be able to utilise in a variety of situations; yet, mixed responses were recorded. The overall majority, at 59% (27), believed that the academic side of a GNVQ was facilitated for the students by the study of Key Skills.

Differences of opinion were recorded in the different sub-groups: the GNVQ course coordinators were more positive about this and had a greater degree of agreement (in further education colleges 67% (5) and school sixth forms 100%(6)) than the tutors in both types of institution: in further education colleges only 47% (9) agreed that Key Skills helped a student to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ and in school sixth forms this fell to a low of 17% (2) with 83% (8) taking the opposite side. Such a swing in the response rates was substantial enough to influence the overall majority. The fluctuations in responses to the question concerned with Key Skills imply that there was not clarity over their purpose (see Fig.13).

However, when those concerned with delivering GNVQs were asked if they found the purpose behind GNVQs to be unclear, the majority (76%/34) said that they do not consider the purpose to be unclear - a trend followed by all groups of respondents. Does this therefore mean that Key Skills are transferable elements of a GNVQ but such transferable elements do not include the ability to help a student to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ?

Fig. 13 Key Skills and Academic Development: Staff Responses





Having asked if the purpose behind Key Skills was clear to those implementing GNVQs and finding that the respondents believe that they are aware of their purpose, are Key Skills then seen as being able to provide breadth to a vocationally specific area? The majority of the respondents were of the belief that they were aware of the purpose of Key Skills (76%/34) and that such a purpose was to provide breadth in a vocationally specific area - an average of 67% (30) was in agreement with this. In one instance all the respondents (the GNVQ course coordinators in school sixth forms) agreed with this. A point of note here is that contrary to this, a third (15) of the respondents did not agree with the statement. If the issue of greater breadth generated out of the inclusion of more Key Skills units was brought into the picture the findings indicate that an average of 77% (35) were of the opinion that the number of Key Skills that are mandatory should not be increased in trying to develop a more general education. What we can deduce from this is that, if Key Skills were seen to provide breadth in a vocationally specific area, the general opinion was that greater breadth through the inclusion of a greater number of Key Skills units was not the way to progress.

### **Student Responses**

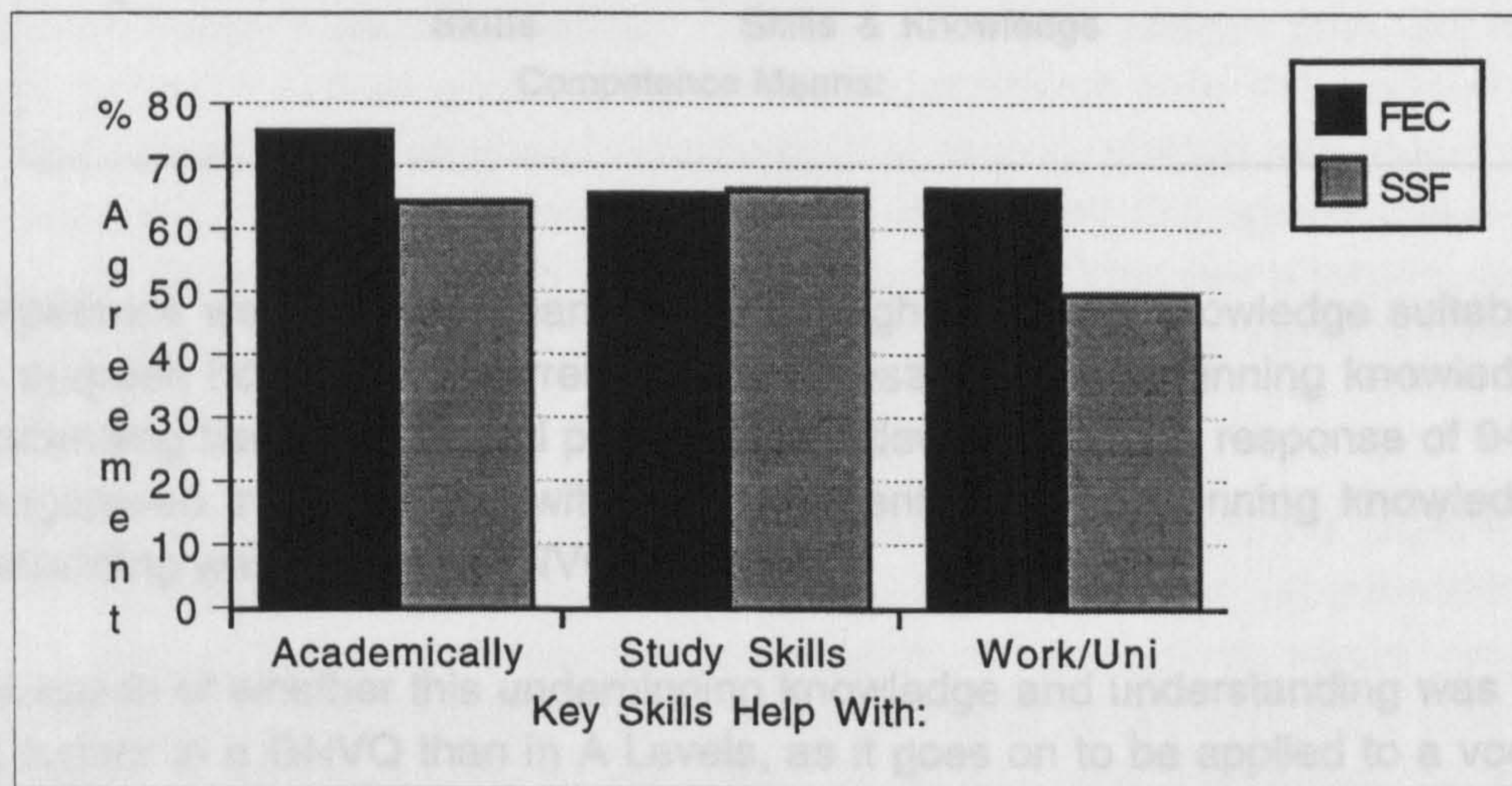
The majority of students involved in this study believed that Key Skills did help them to cope with the academic aspects of a GNVQ programme and that they help develop study skills: 71% (142) opined that Key Skills did help students cope with the academic side of a GNVQ. Likewise, 67% (134) also held the belief that Key Skills helped to develop study skills. The findings also show that 60% (120) of the students involved in the survey thought that Key Skills did develop students for university and employment. This indicates that the main body of respondents were of the opinion that Key Skills both helped a student to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ and helped to develop study skills. Such skills were also seen to be necessary for future progression whether it be into employment or university. These results indicate that the students involved in the survey were aware of the purpose of Key Skills. This is verified as 65% (130) of the respondents did believe that they were aware of the purpose of Key Skills. A point of note, however, is that the students studying in school sixth forms were less convinced about Key Skills issues than their counterparts in further education colleges. This can be illustrated as follows:

- \* when asked if Key Skills helped students to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ 61% (22) of the Advanced Level students in school sixth forms agreed compared with 79% (67) of the respondents from further education colleges; at Intermediate Level the difference in the response rate was not significant (78%/25 further education colleges and 69%/24 school sixth forms)
- \* the issue of whether Key Skills were seen to be necessary for university and employment brought mixed responses from those students studying the Advanced Level GNVQ Business - with 77% (65) in further education colleges and only 50% (18) in school sixth forms agreeing with the statement. Of the remainder in further education colleges only 7% (6) did not believe that Key Skills were necessary for university and employment, (17% (14) did not know), whilst in school sixth forms the responses showed that 44% (16) disagreed that Key Skills were necessary for university and employment (6% (2) did not know).



- \* similarly when questioning the ability of Key Skills helping develop study skills those studying at Advanced Level in school sixth forms were not as convinced as those in further education colleges - with 53% (19) and 70% (59) agreeing respectively - this meant that almost half (43%/17) of those in school sixth forms did not think that Key Skills helped to develop study skills; yet, at Intermediate Level, those studying in school sixth forms were more positive than those studying in further education colleges with 80% (28) and 65% (21) respectively agreeing with the issue of study skills being developed in Key Skills.

Fig. 14 Perceived Abilities of Key Skills: Student Responses



Overall, the trend was that the majority in each of the two sub-groups, ie: students studying at further education colleges and students studying at school sixth forms, agreed in principle to the issues raised. However, the students at further education colleges were more collective in their responses with a greater majority agreeing with the statements.

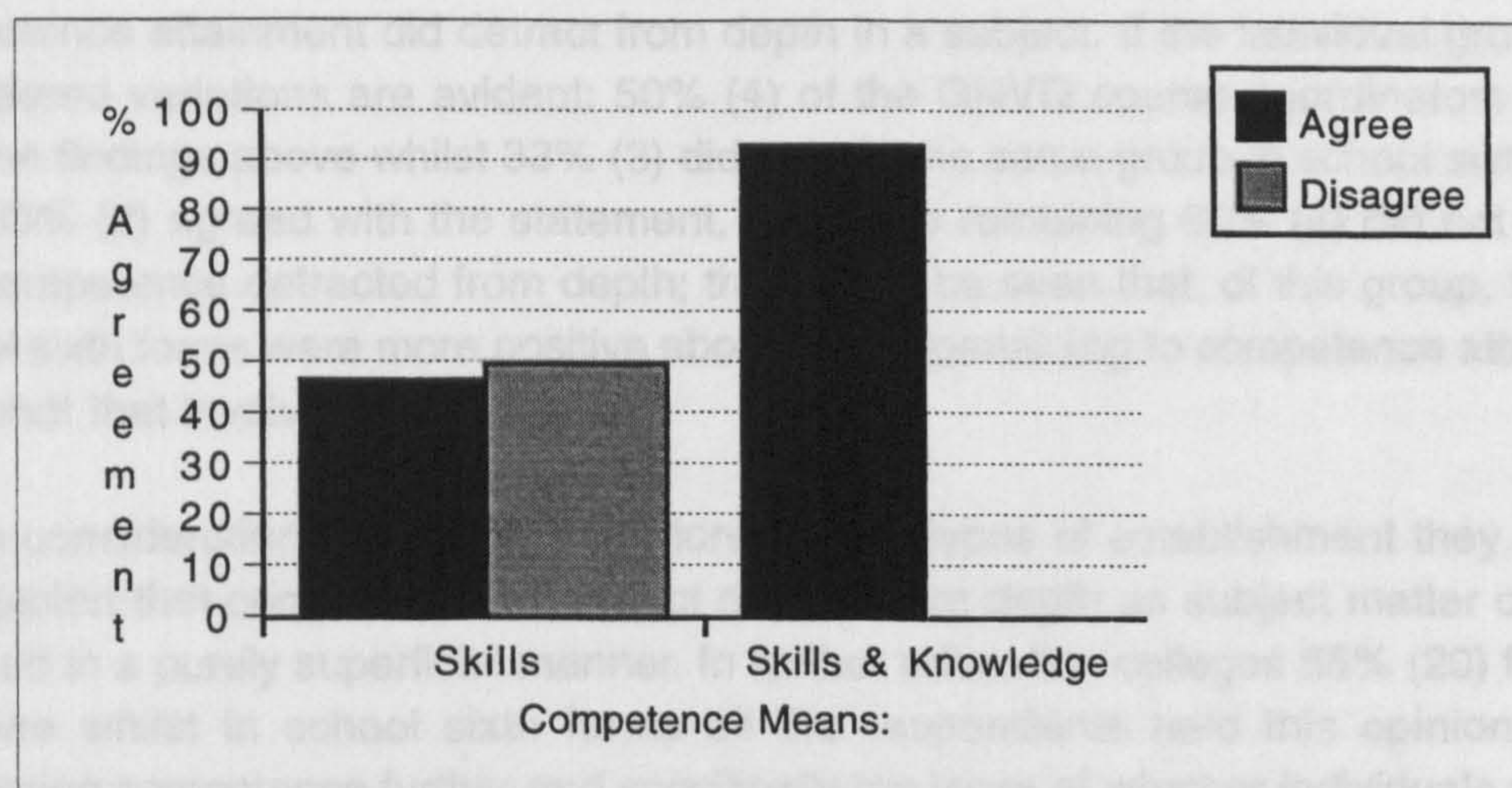
## Competence

### Staff Responses

The issue of what 'competence' was seen to mean was raised: was it equated to skills alone or to skills and knowledge? It (competence) was seen to mean more than mere skill attainment for a given purpose; it was equated to the attainment of both skills and knowledge suitable for a given purpose. Overall 47% (21) of the staff agreed that competence meant skill attainment. Of the remaining, 50% (22) disagreed with this and 3%(1) registered a neutral response. When asked if competence meant skills and knowledge the results changed in that competence was seen to denote skills and knowledge rather than just skills by an overwhelming 93% (42) of the respondents - a trend which was followed by all groups questioned.



Fig. 15 Defining Competence: Staff Responses



If competence was seen to mean having enough skills and knowledge suitable for a given purpose how does it correspond to the issue of underpinning knowledge and understanding being an integral part of GNVQ development? A response of 94% (42) was registered in agreement with the statement that underpinning knowledge and understanding was crucial to GNVQs.

The question of whether this underpinning knowledge and understanding was taken a stage further in a GNVQ than in A Levels, as it goes on to be applied to a vocational area, generated positive correlation with 76% (34) in accord with the proposition. Divergence from the mean was registered by certain individual groups: 40% (2) of the GNVQ course coordinators in school sixth forms opposed this stance as did 24% (5) and 17% (2) of the tutors in further education colleges and school sixth forms respectively. The general trend was maintained, however, as the majority still registered in favour of GNVQs with those in further education colleges being more positive in their responses.

Responses to questions such as these express that, firstly, both skills and knowledge denote competence and, secondly, that underpinning knowledge and understanding were seen as crucial to a GNVQ (93%/42 and 94%/43 respectively). In addition to this knowledge and understanding were also considered by many to be taken a stage further in a GNVQ than in A Levels as it was then actually applied to a vocational setting.

This situation was complicated by consideration being given to the externally set end of unit tests as the majority of staff, in holding the belief that knowledge and understanding as well as skills are seen as being central to GNVQs, viewed the tests with some suspicion. This was represented by the majority (68%/31) of the respondents agreeing that the tests were about facts and not concerned with the development of underpinning knowledge and understanding. Such a principle can be seen to be at odds with the ethos behind GNVQs: development and encouragement of underpinning knowledge and understanding.



A further issue of contention was registered when the issue of depth was raised in conjunction with competence. Of the entire cohort 62% (28) registered the opinion that competence attainment did detract from depth in a subject. If the individual groups are considered variations are evident: 50% (4) of the GNVQ course coordinators agreed with the findings above whilst 33% (3) did not. Of the same group in school sixth forms only 33% (2) agreed with the statement, whilst the remaining 80% (4) did not believe that competence detracted from depth; thus it can be seen that, of this group, those in school sixth forms were more positive about issues pertaining to competence attainment and what that involves.

When consideration is given to the tutors in both types of establishment they were of the opinion that competence did in fact detract from depth as subject matter could be covered in a purely superficial manner. In further education colleges 65% (20) followed this line whilst in school sixth forms all the respondents held this opinion. When discussing competence further and specifically the issue of whether individuals are able to 'do' something without understanding it, the majority (70%/32) agreed that a student could 'do' something without necessarily understanding it. This was a trend followed by all but one of the sub-groups: 60% (4) of the GNVQ course coordinators in school sixth forms did not share this opinion.

The overall findings generated out of these questions were that the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that competence meant more than just skill attainment; it was also seen as being concerned with knowledge. However, competence was seen to detract from depth; this manifested itself in that students could carry out a task without necessarily understanding what they had done and why (exception to this was registered by GNVQ course coordinators in school sixth forms who believed that competence did not detract from depth and a student would have to understand something in order to carry it out properly). The most common perception was that competence could be covered in a purely superficial way which could in turn detract from depth of understanding.

The question of whether a GNVQ business student was competent in a variety of situations generated an almost unanimous result. A majority of 88% (40) was in favour, with those in further education colleges being more positive than the respondents from school sixth forms.

Having established that underpinning knowledge and understanding is considered to be an integral part of GNVQ programmes, that GNVQ Business students are competent in a variety of situations, the question arises as to whether depth and understanding are also requisite - even when they are not specified. The GNVQ course coordinators involved in the study were of the opinion that both depth and understanding had to be attained in a GNVQ irrespective of whether or not they are specified (67%/ 5 in further education colleges and 60%/4 in school sixth forms); when the tutor responses were considered differing responses were registered with 58% (11) of those in further education colleges following the same trend, but 67% (7) of those in school sixth forms holding an opposing view point in the belief that depth and understanding are not specified and do not therefore have to be met.



Division such as this was further demonstrated when depth in a GNVQ was related to the Performance Criteria. It was suggested that the Performance Criteria was prescriptive and therefore detrimental to depth attainment. Mixed views were expressed with 50% (22) of the cohort agreeing with the stance outlined above and 41% (18) disagreeing with it. When the individual groups are considered then the results show the evident confusion: of the GNVQ course coordinators 67% (5) of those in further education colleges disagreed with the proposition as did 60% (4) of those in school sixth forms; conversely the tutor responses were that 65% (13) of those in further education colleges agreed that depth cannot be recognised in a GNVQ due to the prescriptive nature of the Performance Criteria as did 67% (7) of those in school sixth forms. This illustrated that the GNVQ course coordinators are far more positive than the tutors when depth and understanding were in question.

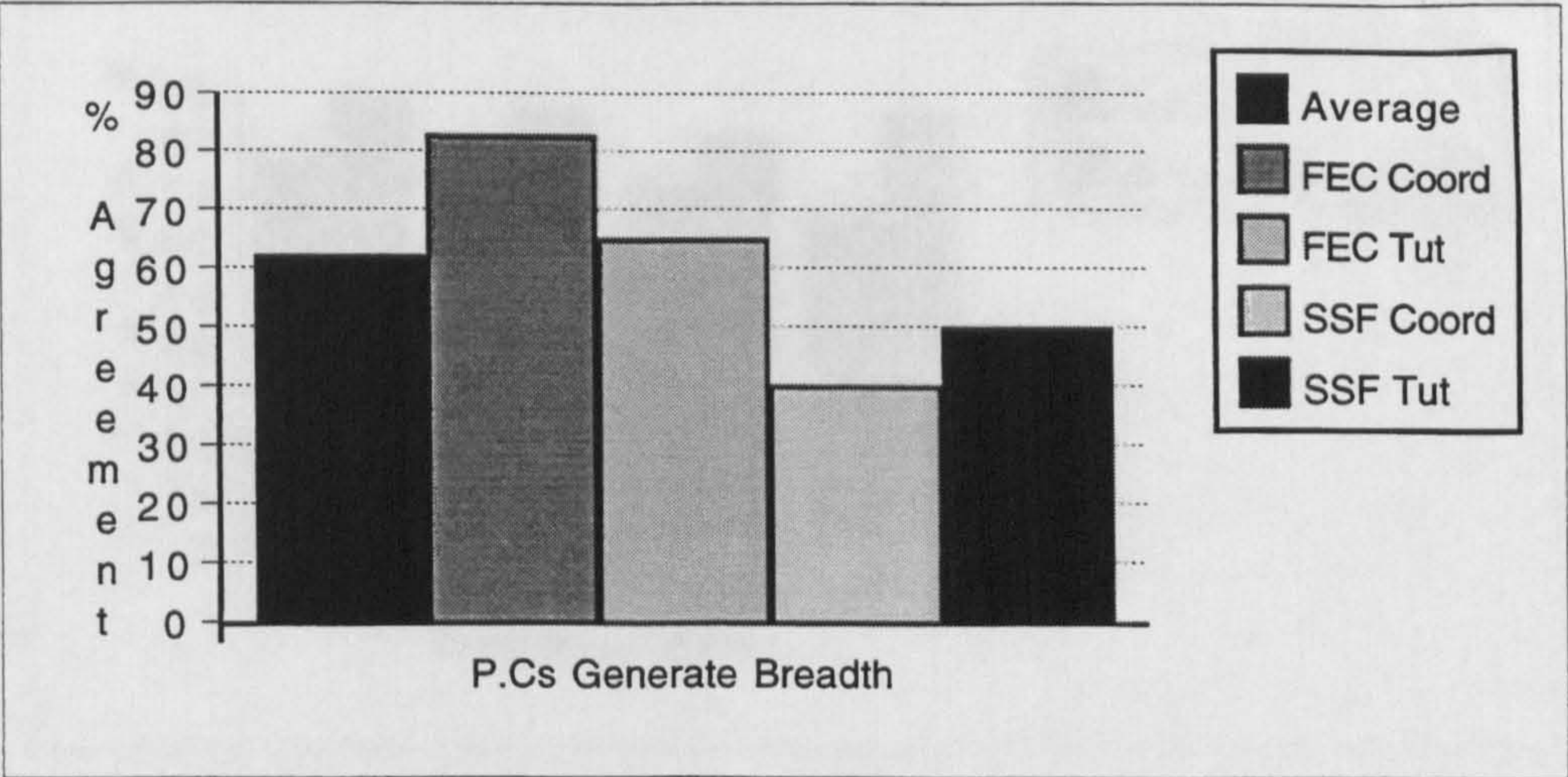
The issue of whether breadth in a GNVQ came at the expense of depth was then considered; the findings again show that there are no conclusive opinions: almost equal percentage responses were registered in favour and against the statement. This manifests as an even split of 44% (20) each and the remaining 12% (5) neither agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Thus it can be deduced that the issue of depth in a GNVQ was an area of great contention with doubts being expressed about whether it was as much an integral part of a GNVQ as was perhaps desired.

Alternatively, responses to the suggestion that the number of Performance Criteria in a GNVQ do indeed generate breadth, communicated that, although the prescriptive nature of the Performance Criteria was perceived as a hindrance in depth attainment, the actual number of Performance Criteria in a GNVQ was seen by 62% (28) of the cohort to generate breadth. Those in further education colleges were more positive about this than those in school sixth forms: of those GNVQ course coordinators in further education colleges 83% (7) agreed with this as did 65% (13) of their tutors; in school sixth forms the results were 40% (2) and 50% (5) respectively. Thus an overall third of the total respondents registered their disagreement. This emphasises that although depth may not be seen to be attained in a GNVQ it was thought that the number of Performance Criteria in a GNVQ did go some way to generating breadth in a GNVQ (see Fig. 16).

Does this breadth, then, come at the expense of depth? The findings indicate that breadth was thought to come from the number of Performance Criteria included in a GNVQ, however, 44% (20) of the respondents thought that such breadth came at the expense of depth; equally, 44% (20) believed that breadth did not mean that depth was necessarily sacrificed, illustrating the complexity of the issues surrounding competence, breadth and depth attainment and the confusion which abounds.



Fig. 16 Performance Criteria, Breadth and Depth: Staff Responses



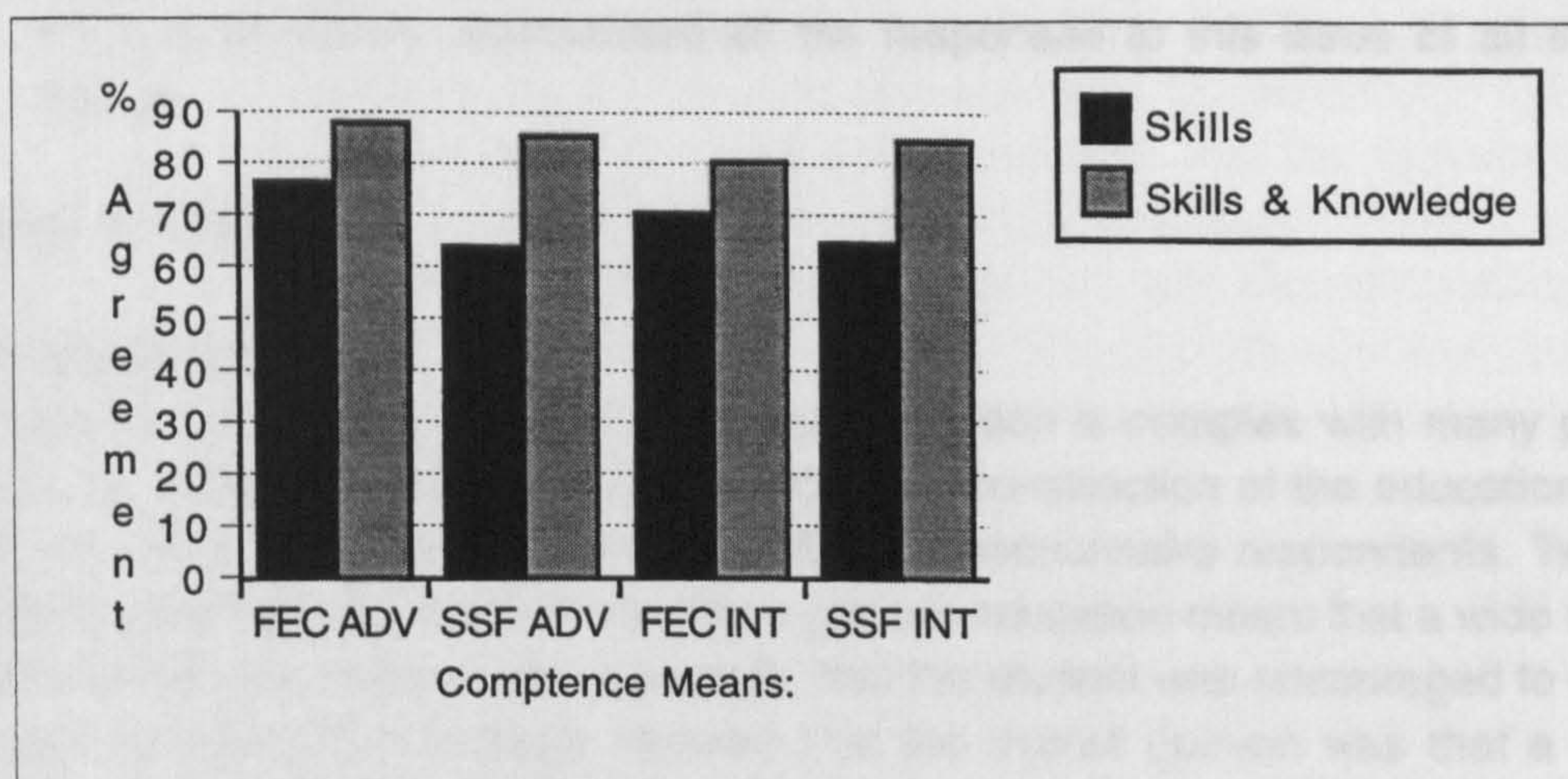
Student Responses

Initially, competence was seen by the majority of the students (69%/ 138) to mean having enough skills for a given purpose; but when the issue of knowledge was brought into the equation 81% (162) thought that skills and knowledge constituted competence. This was verified when the students were asked if they could ‘do’ something without necessarily understanding it. The popular opinion (71%/142) was that to ‘do’ something required that understanding also took place, indicating that competence was seen to denote both skills and knowledge.

The issue of competence is often equated to narrowness and specialisation. Studying a GNVQ, in whatever vocational area, means that specialisation takes place. However, the majority of the GNVQ students involved in the survey, whether studying in a further education college or a school sixth form, were of the opinion that a GNVQ meant that a wide range of tasks were covered (86%/172). Equally, when the field was narrowed to consider only GNVQ Business students and whether they are competent in a variety of situations, 78% (156) of the students were in accord. The fact that GNVQs focus on a single vocational area altered the results. The majority still thought that a GNVQ did not restrict a student to being competent in a single vocational area, but this majority had fallen to only 49% (98) with 35% (70) holding the opinion that a GNVQ did in fact restrict the student and their potential. This indicates that although GNVQ students, and those studying business in particular, are thought to be competent in a wide range and in a variety of situations, confusion exists about whether such competence is restricted to a single, albeit broad, vocational area. There is a focus on one particular area, but the students were of the opinion that this area was broad enough not to restrict their choice of career paths. This may be attributed to the fact that any GNVQ aims to cover a very broad vocational area which can in fact create many choices and options for the student.



Fig. 17 Defining Competence: Student Responses



The results indicated above are the collective responses of all students involved in the study. When the two sub-groups of further education colleges and school sixth forms are viewed separately the overall trends were the same; where a majority response rate in further education colleges was registered, similarly, a majority was also experienced in school sixth forms. However, as with the Key Skills issues, slight variations did occur when considering the institution studied at:

- \* the ability of GNVQ students to pin point exactly what they are able to do brought a mixed response: the majority in both sets of sub-groups thought that they could say what they were able to do; those in school sixth forms were less convinced with only 50% (38) of the students agreeing with the statement, compared to 78% (97) in further education colleges, this division was evident at both levels of study: in further education colleges 66% (56) of the Advanced Level students and 81% (26) of the Intermediate Levels students agreed with this point compared to 50% (18) and 49% (17) in school sixth forms; this may be related to perceptions of breadth in a GNVQ as the wide number and variety of topics that can be studied may in fact cloud the issue and mean that a student does not feel able to say exactly what it is they are able to do
- \* the ability to 'do' something without necessarily understanding it was not thought to be possible by the majority GNVQ students (71%/142) targeted for the survey. If this is considered by institution then, although the trends are the same, the students studying at school sixth forms were more convinced, particularly those at the Advanced Level of study, with 83% (30) holding the belief that to 'do' something also meant that understanding took place, as compared to 63% (54) of the same group in further education colleges, at intermediate Level the results showed little variation
- \* on the whole 78% (156) of all respondents were of the opinion that GNVQ Business students are competent in a variety of situations. If this is analysed by institution the results vary slightly with school sixth form Advanced Levels



- education colleges and 77% (27) of those in school sixth forms agreeing that GNVQ Business students are competent in a variety of situations; a reasonable level of conviction surrounded all the responses to this issue of all the sub-groups.

## **Breadth in Education**

### **Staff Responses**

The question of what constitutes a general education is complex with many possible responses. Using the information gathered in the construction of the educational ideal types a number of propositions were put to the questionnaire respondents. Two such propositions were suggested, firstly, that a general education meant that a wide range of subject matter was covered and, secondly, that the student was encouraged to develop an inquiring mind. The findings showed that the overall opinion was that a general education meant that a wide range of subjects were covered (77%/35) in which the student was to develop the ability to question facts. An inquiring mind was also thought to be central to the aims of general education (68%/31) - the strongest response was registered by the GNVQ course coordinators in school sixth forms with 80% (5), whilst only 50% (4) of those in further education colleges followed this trend, with the tutors in both groups deviating little from the mean.

If a general education was thought to mean that a wide range of subjects were studied and that the students used such subjects as a vehicle for developing an inquiring mind, what then makes a liberal education? The majority (79%/36) of the cohort were of the opinion that a liberal education broadened the mind and freed the person from narrow thought. However, those in school sixth forms at GNVQ course coordinator level were not so convinced; 20% (1) agreed and 20% (1) disagreed with the remaining 60% (4) neither agreeing or disagreeing.

The findings suggest that there is some overall agreement about what constitutes a general education but that confusion exists over what constitutes a liberal education. (A point of note here is that some respondents, particularly at GNVQ course coordinator level, did express concern over both liberal and general education being tied down to a number of statements, giving rise to a substantial percentage of the respondents selecting the 'don't know' variable.)

When such issues are related to GNVQs and whether the range in a GNVQ ensures that a general education was achieved the survey results testify that the majority of the respondents agreed that the range in a GNVQ ensured that a general education was achieved (56%/25) and that it was the wide range of subjects which promoted a broad, general education (68%/31) - breadth was ensured and was perceived as being present in GNVQs in the form of a wide range of subjects studied.

If GNVQs are seen to promote a broad, general education, how do they compare to A Levels? Are GNVQs more general than A Levels and, if so, is breadth developed more in GNVQs than A Levels? The popular opinion was that GNVQs are indeed more general than A Levels (65%/ 29); but when individual responses were considered it



was evident that the tutors in both types of institution are more positive about this than the GNVQ course coordinators, who veered on the side of caution and registered an almost 50%-50% split. Was breadth then developed more in GNVQs than in A Levels? An average of 62% (28) agreed that this was the case with the trend being followed by all groups questioned. Accordingly, 62% (28) disagreed with the statement which suggested that there was no breadth in GNVQs and an average of 76% (34) did not believe that GNVQs, being concerned with a vocationally specific, automatically ruled out breadth. GNVQs were therefore considered to have breadth and their vocational nature was not seen to detract from such breadth.

Does this vocational nature of GNVQs then mean that a liberal, as opposed to a general, education cannot be achieved? The majority of respondents (76%/34) were of the opinion that the vocational bias of GNVQs did not rule out a liberal education being achieved. Such results indicate that the vocational bias of GNVQs was not seen to detract from the breadth, which was thought to be present in GNVQs in part due to the wide range of subjects studied, and that a liberal education could be achieved in GNVQs irrespective of their vocational nature.

The respondents generally agreed that a liberal education broadened the mind and freed the person from narrow thought and disagreed that the vocational nature of a GNVQ meant that a liberal education could not be achieved. The vocational nature of GNVQs was not seen to automatically preclude a liberal education. The question then arises, that if a liberal education has the qualities of being able to broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought, do GNVQs have such abilities? This issue was addressed by questioning the ability of GNVQs to teach students to think for themselves in any great way. Two thirds of the respondents were of the opinion that GNVQs did teach students to think for themselves. GNVQs were thought to offer a broad, general education which has the potential to develop an inquiring mind in students whereby they are taught to think for themselves. Such attributes of a GNVQ were equated to the potential to offer a liberal education. Results such as these verify that the range in a GNVQ was seen to generate breadth and the belief that the vocational nature of GNVQ did not detract from breadth meant that GNVQs, in certain respects, had the ability or potential to offer a liberal education.

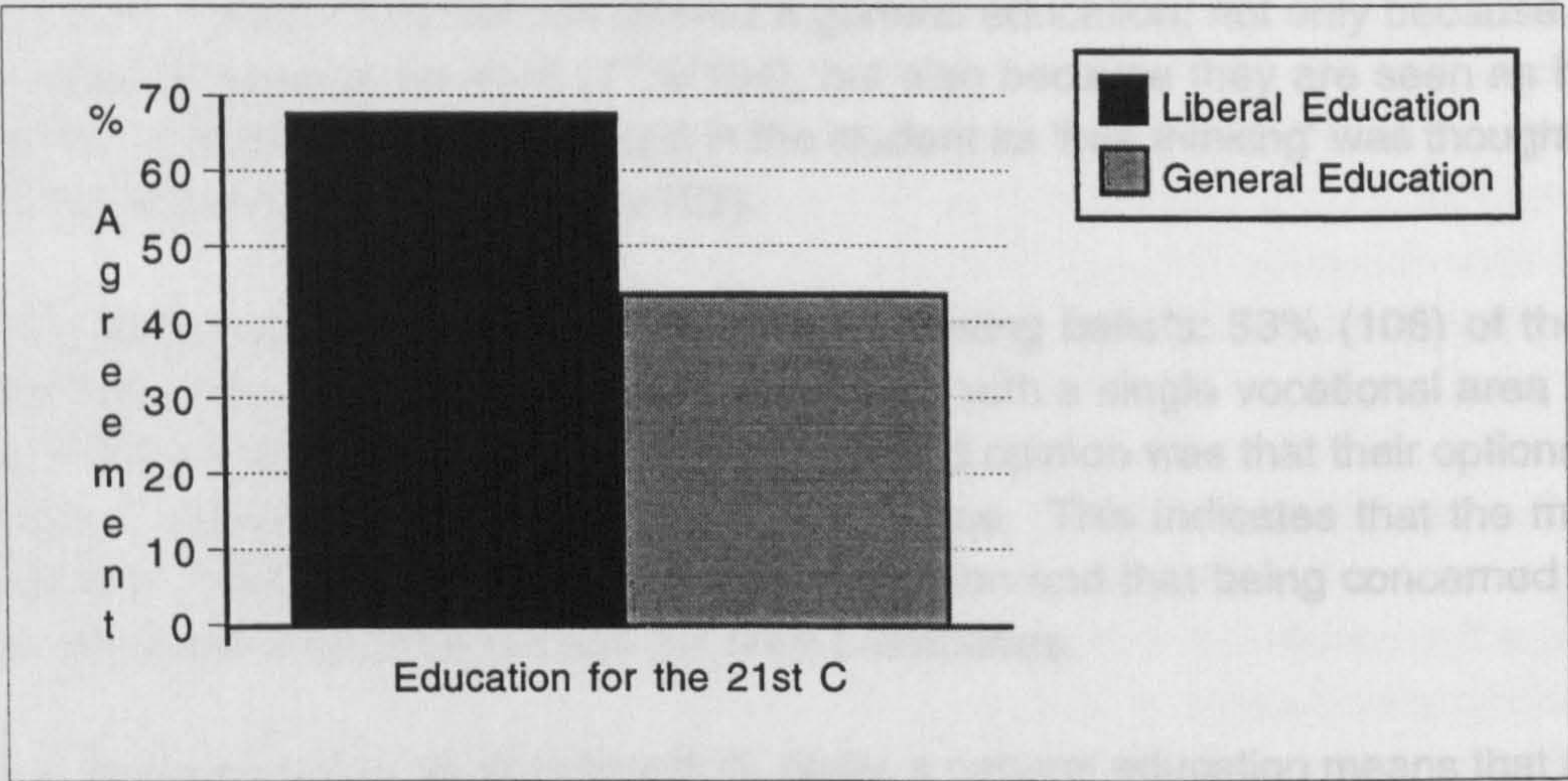
General education has been identified as offering a wide range of subjects and having the aim to develop an inquiring mind in the student whereas liberal education was seen as broadening the mind and freeing the person from narrow thought. However, GNVQs were not seen as being able to promote free thinking; (65% (29) of the cohort did not consider this a possibility - with the school sixth form GNVQ coordinators being less sure but school sixth form tutors being the most convinced). The majority of the respondents (79%/36) agreed that liberal education held the promise of broadening the mind and freeing the person from narrow thought, however 65% (29) of the cohort were not of the belief that GNVQs promoted such attributes, inferring that GNVQs do not offer a liberal education but a general one.

The results of the attitudinal survey so far indicate that GNVQs do in fact offer a form of general education with, perhaps, the possibility of offering a liberal education (however



locally defined). Is this considered sufficient for individual students' future development? In an attempt to address this the following statements were proposed: students are entitled to a liberal education throughout their studies and a liberal education post-16 is necessary to prepare individuals for life in the 21st century. The majority of staff in both cases - 78% (35) and 68% (31) respectively - agreed with both statements communicating that a liberal education was seen to be the way forward. When the issue of whether a general education or a liberal education was more appropriate for life in the 21st century 68% (31) agreed that a liberal education was necessary to prepare individuals for life in the 21st century, 56% (25) disagreed that general education was the more appropriate form of education in line with the first set of responses - that liberal education was more appropriate for life in the 21st century.

Fig. 18 An Appropriate Education for the 21st Century: Staff Responses



Subsequently the question arose as to whether GNVQs are the way in which education should be progressing if the idea of preparing individuals for their future existence was a central interest. The concern here was that a liberal education was seen as broadening the mind and freeing the person from narrow thought and that students were entitled to a liberal education throughout their studies, including post -16 education, as it was deemed necessary for life in the 21st century. GNVQs were not seen to promote free thinking but were seen to offer a general education rather than a liberal one. The question then arises as to whether they are an adequate form of education provision to take us into the 21st century; a question that will be addressed in the following chapter.

**Student Responses**

The consensus (83%/166) among the students involved with this stage of the investigation was that a general education did mean that a wide range of subject matter was covered, that it also aimed to develop an inquiring mind in the student (78%/156). By comparison, if a general education was seen to cover a variety of subjects and to develop an inquiring mind in the student, how was liberal education perceived? Does



liberal education broaden the mind and therefore free the individual from narrow thought? The respondents were not so sure about how to classify liberal education with just over half the respondents agreeing with the suggested statement reflecting the confusion over what the students thought constituted a liberal education whilst general education was seen as being easier to identify; the issue of whether, by the very nature of the title 'General National Vocational Qualifications', students then felt more able to respond to statements regarding general education but not liberal education is a point that must be taken into consideration here.

GNVQs were identified by the majority of the respondents (77%/ 154) as promoting a general education because of the wide range of subjects studied on the programme. In providing a wide range of topics GNVQs were seen to offer a general education but are they also seen as being able to develop an inquiring mind in the student - another perceived aim of general education? The findings indicate that the majority of respondents thought that GNVQs offered a general education, not only because of the wide range of subjects covered (77%/154), but also because they are seen as having the ability to develop an inquiring mind in the student as 'free thinking' was thought to be a part of GNVQ development (61%/122).

The students involved in this study held the following beliefs: 53% (106) of the total respondents did not believe that being concerned with a single vocational area meant that a GNVQ could not be broad, as the considered opinion was that their options were kept open; however, 35% (70) opposed this stance. This indicates that the majority agreed that GNVQs offer a broad, general education and that being concerned with a single vocational area does not rule out such possibilities.

The student responses so far show that, firstly, a general education means that a wide range of subject matter is studied; secondly, that a general education aims to promote an inquiring mind in the student; and thirdly, the vocational nature of GNVQs does not necessarily detract from such aims. What must be acknowledged is that although the majority held this belief there was much confusion and differing opinions were expressed - so the results do not represent a uniform belief.

(A point of note concerning a liberal education is that confusion was experienced when the students were asked what constituted a liberal education; the issue of what constituted a liberal education was unresolved by both groups at both levels.) Nonetheless, the possibility of GNVQs providing a liberal education, in that they broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought, was posed. As has already been identified GNVQs were seen by 61% (122) of the respondents to promote free thinking. Does this then mean that GNVQs, in promoting free thinking, have the potential to free the individual from narrow thought, broadening the mind and offering a liberal education? Such a question cannot be answered here but will be a focal point of the following chapter.

A Levels and GNVQs are frequently contrasted. In this survey GNVQs were seen to be more general than A Levels (64%/128) but the issue of which system, GNVQs or A Levels, developed greater breadth received mixed opinions: 48% or 96 students (the

most-popular response) agreed that GNVQs developed breadth more than A Levels, but 17% (34) disagreed with this and 35% (70) did not know. Such confusion may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the GNVQ students surveyed had no, or little, experience of the A Level system and therefore had nothing with which to compare GNVQs.

The question was posed whether GNVQs should offer more options, or if they currently offer too many options and do not require any further extension. The majority (55%/110) of the respondents did believe that a GNVQ needed to include a wider range of subjects in each vocational area; however 74% (148) of the respondents also responded that there was no need to include any further options as a GNVQ was perceived as offering too many options already. Such confusion clouds the issue of whether a GNVQ really does have the potential to offer a general education (as the findings suggested). These contradictory results may be attributed to the personal preference of those surveyed, in that they would like to see particular (favourite) topics included in the GNVQ programme. This would be in line with the responses that suggested that no further options needed to be included in a GNVQ as there are already too many (or sufficient to mean that a broad, general education is attained?) The main findings of this section of the survey show that a general education was seen to mean that a wide range of subject matter was studied; the wide range of subjects on a GNVQ was seen to promote a broad, general education.

The issue of class contact time was raised in line with the idea, as generated in the initial exploratory interviews, that an increased timetable improved the potential of a general education occurring and time given to other subjects would in turn increase the potential of offering a liberal education. The general trend was that increased class contact time per week should not happen. This varied in degree from institution and Level: in further education colleges at Advanced Level 81% (69) and at Intermediate Level 78% (25) did not think that the amount of class contact time per week should be increased; conversely in school sixth forms the results were 69% (25) and 34% (12) respectively. The issue of whether such an increase in class contact time per week would increase the level of student understanding brought further mixed responses: in further education colleges at Advanced Level 51% (43) did not think that such a move would increase their understanding, at Intermediate Level 50% (16) also took this stance. In school sixth forms at Advanced and Intermediate Levels the results were in contrast to this with 67% (24) and 80% (28) agreeing that increased class contact time would increase their understanding. A point which these questions failed to answer was the current level of class contact time per week. Consequently, it is not known if there were any differences in the levels of class contact time experienced in different institutions.

## **Teaching & Learning Methods**

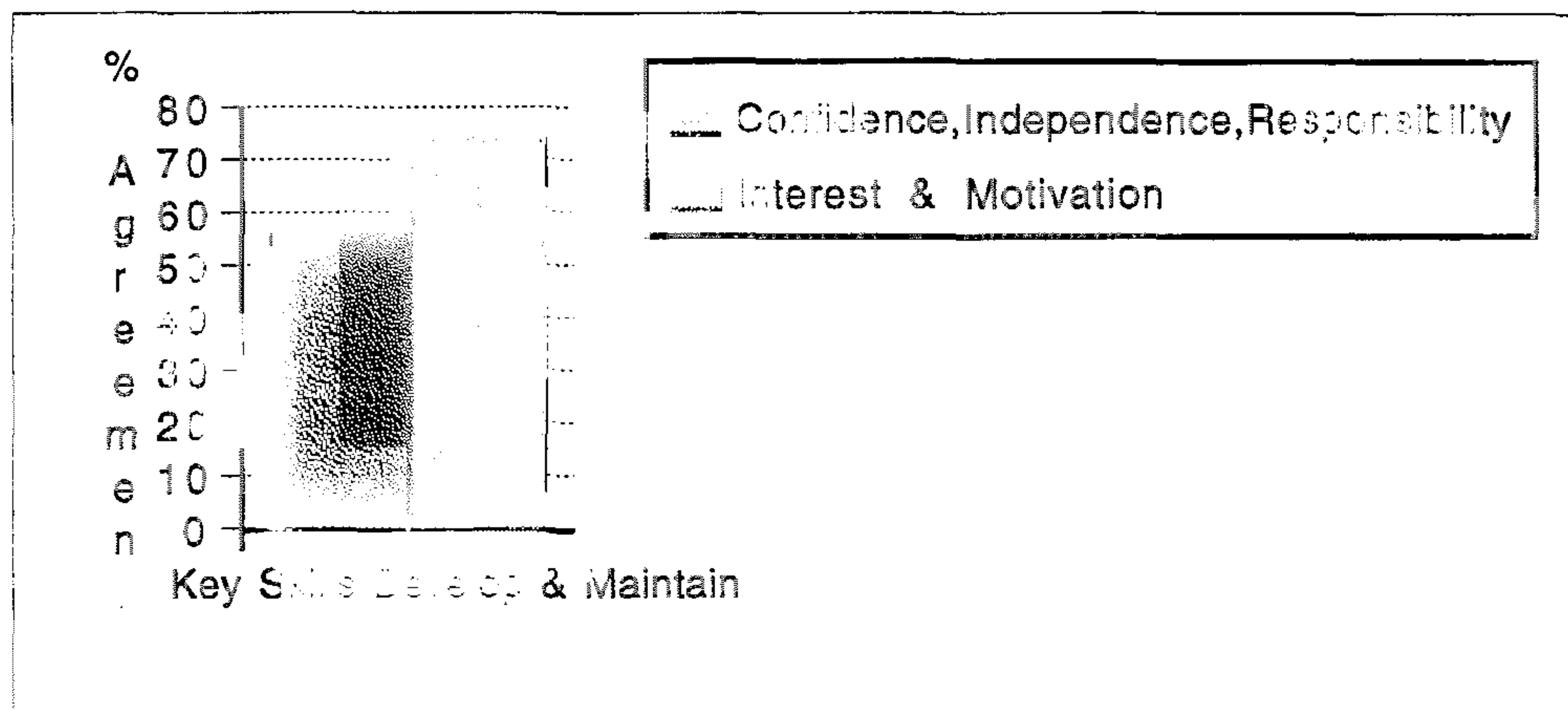
### **Staff Responses**

In line with the student responses the majority (70%/32) of staff concerned with implementing GNVQs did not believe that the number of lectures should be increased. This trend was followed by all groups with the tutors in both institutions being more positive (83%/25). The reason attributed to this was that the popular belief (73%/33)



that lectures were not considered interesting for the students, when compared to a student centred approach. The effectiveness of the student centred approach, as advocated in GNVQs, was questioned. The general opinion was that the student centred approach of GNVQs helps to develop students' confidence, independence and responsibility (56%/25) and such an approach also helped to maintain both student interest and motivation (74%/33).

*Fig. 19 Key Skills: Staff Responses*



The perceived value of Key Skills appeared to be in that they helped the student to develop confidence, independence and responsibility and that they helped maintain student interest and motivation; perhaps adding the breadth to a GNVQ programme. If Key Skills help to generate breadth in education should the number currently available to the student populous be extended to include a variety of other subjects, therein creating more breadth? The overall opinion was that the Key Skills in GNVQs should not be increased to include aspects such as a mandatory foreign language (44%/20) or personal interest subjects (44%/20), but that the current mandatory Key Skills should have separate classes rather than total integration (56%/25) so that clarity can be achieved in those particular subjects.

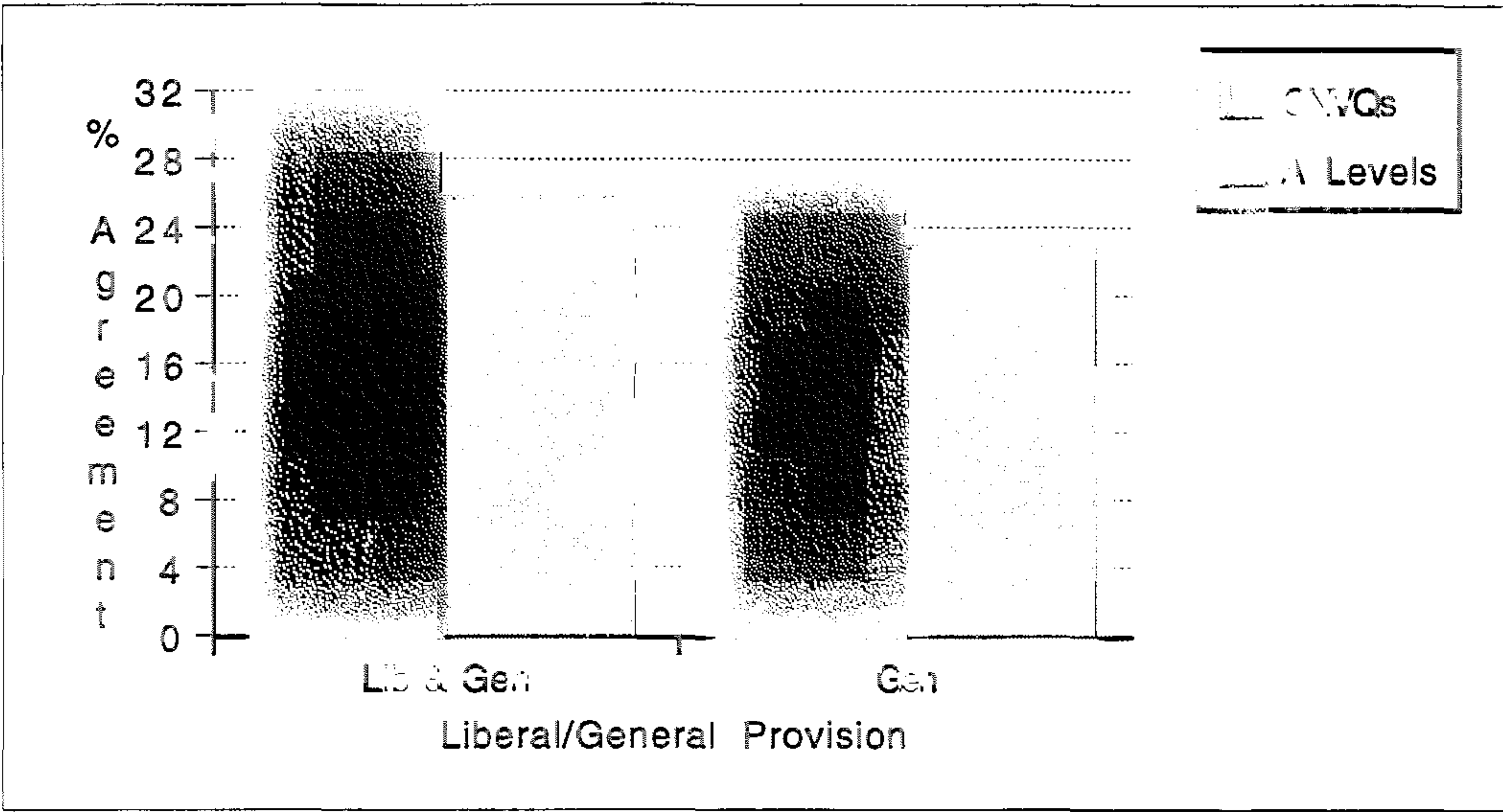
The parity of esteem between A Levels and GNVQs is the subject of much debate. (A point of note here is that many respondents chose not to answer the questions dealing with whether A Levels and/or GNVQs offered a liberal or a general education; some respondents made a point of commenting that there is much confusion over what these terms actually mean and that clarification was required before they felt able to respond fairly.) Such issues are subjects for further research and will be picked up again in the next phase of the research. A series of propositions was posed to the questionnaire respondents that involved making comparisons between the two programmes. These propositions were in line with a salient feature of the overall research problem; perceptions were gauged as to whether A Levels or GNVQs were seen to offer a liberal education, a general education, both or neither. The responses showed that A Levels were seen to offer both types of education by 26% (12) with slightly fewer believing that they offered a general education only (23%/10). In the case of GNVQs they were first thought of as a combined liberal and general education (32%/14), secondly, a general education (27%/12) and thirdly as offering a liberal education, by



only 9% (4) (see Fig. 20).

In an attempt to tease out what characteristics were perceived as liberal or general education and how these related to A Levels and GNVQ provision the question of which mode of education required the analysis of facts was posed: GNVQs and/or A Levels; the responses were in favour of both systems (73%/33). The question that is raised out of such findings is whether the analysis of facts is intrinsic to a liberal education only, or a general education also? Again, these issues will be subject to further analysis in the following chapter.

*Fig. 20 A Levels & GNVQs as Liberal/General Education: Staff Responses*



### Student Responses

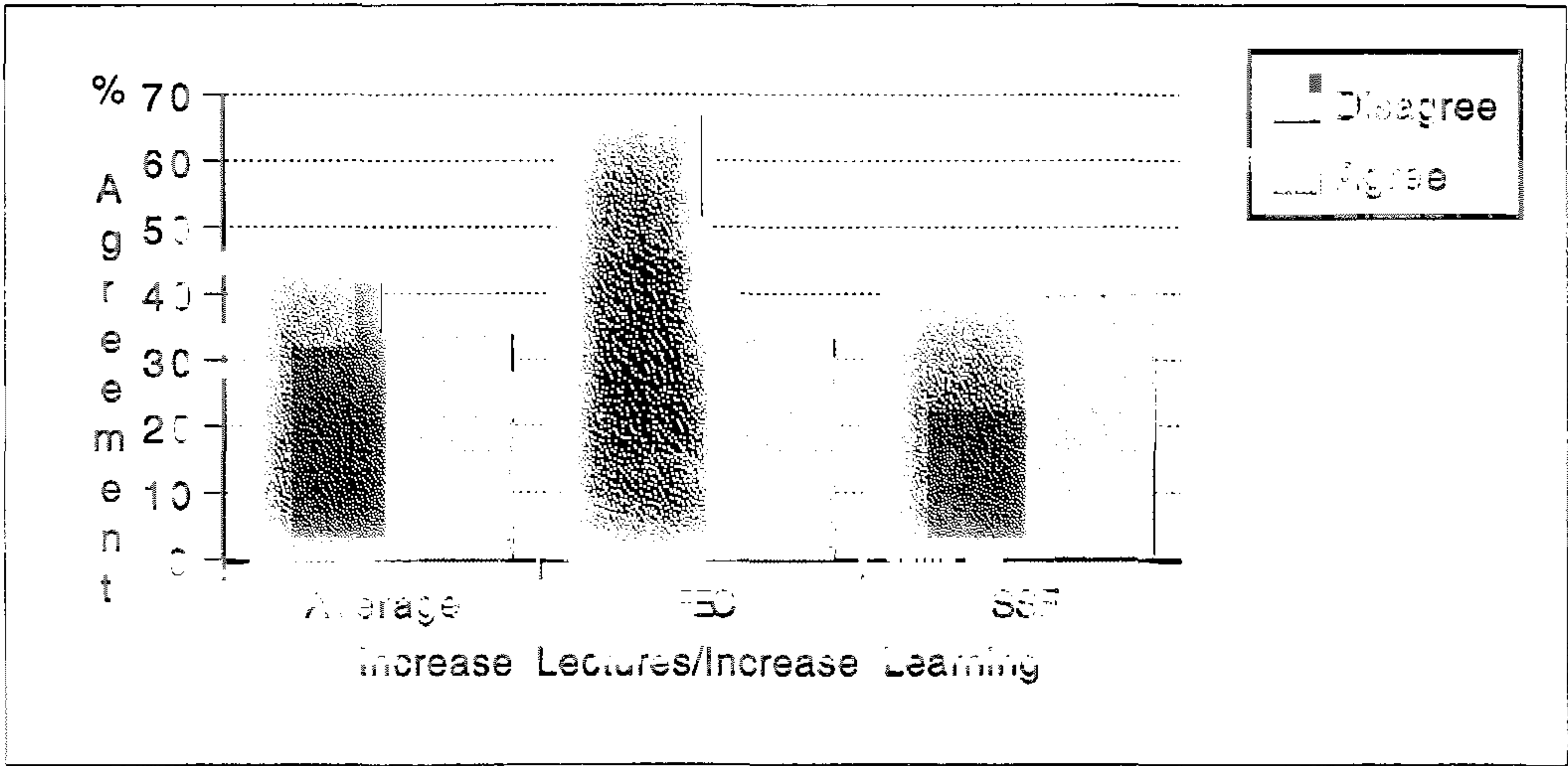
The popular belief among the students involved in the survey was that increasing the number of lectures would not mean that they would learn more, with 45% (90) of the cohort selecting this option. However, 34% (68) disagreed with the stance, in the belief that increased lectures would increase learning. A division existed here between the two sub-groups with those studying in further education colleges holding the belief that they would not necessarily learn more if the number of lectures was increased. Those in school sixth forms did not necessarily agree with this stance; there were equal percentages for and against the statement at both Levels - registering approximately two fifths each with the final fifth selecting the 'don't know' variable (see Fig. 21).

The question of whether lectures would be more interesting than a student centred approach received similar response rates with 45% (90) disagreeing that lectures were more interesting than a student centred approach, whilst 28% (56) disagreed with this and a further 26% (52) selecting the 'don't know' variable. The only discrepancy recorded here was in school sixth forms at Intermediate Level where 42% (15) thought that lectures would be more interesting than the student centred approach. Responses such as these are complex as they could easily reflect the differing levels of confidence young adults experienced in times of change, specifically the move from a school



situation, where learning is tutor-led, into a situation which requires the student to take responsibility for their own learning. Such a student centred approach was seen to develop confidence, independence and responsibility. It was also seen to maintain interest and motivation by the majority of the respondents 64% (128) and 58% (112) respectively. (A point of note is that, conversely, a total of 26% (9) of the senior, sixth form/intermediate Level students did not believe that GNVQs helped to maintain interest or motivation. This is in line with the same group holding the opinion that lectures would be more interesting than a student centred approach.)

Fig. 21 Increasing Lectures Would Increase Learning: Student Responses



The teaching of Key Skills and the question of whether separate classes should be provided generated the following findings: 39% (78) thought that the mandatory Key Skills only required separate classes, whilst 34% (68) thought that all the Key Skills (including the personal development Key Skills) required separate classes and a further 22% (44) did not think that separate classes were necessary for any Key Skill unit. The inclusion of further Key Skills, such as a mandatory foreign language or personal development studies, was raised. The most interest was generated by the possible inclusion of personal interest subject with an average of 48% (96) selecting this variable. If this is compared to the question of whether GNVQs should offer a greater number of subjects similar findings are evident and offer some confirmation of this stance: 55% (110) of the cohort were of the opinion that a GNVQ needed to offer a wider subject range; this range may include personal interest subjects.

The debate about the parity of esteem between A Levels and GNVQs may well influence student, as well as staff, perceptions. The differing perceptions with regard to whether A Levels and GNVQs offer a liberal/general education, are shown in the following results: A Levels were, in the majority, seen to provide both a liberal and a general education whilst GNVQs, in the majority, were seen to provide a more general education with a liberal education being a possibility. If this is extended to include the analysis of facts both systems were thought to require fact analysis. Yet no conclusive findings, or overall consensus were generated and issues of parity, with regard to

liberal/general education, were still not resolved.

### **Hypothesis**

By way of conclusion, the questionnaire findings suggest that, in line with the initial exploratory interviews, GNVQs were favourably received by those implementing the programme; they were seen as comparable to alternative systems such as A Levels and GCSEs that should not be seen as the easier option as they were considered demanding programmes of study in their own right - not necessarily the correct choice for lower ability students or those not suited to A Levels. Parity of esteem between GNVQs, A Levels and GCSEs, in terms of level of demand and the challenge offered by each programme of study, was seen to be achieved.

Conversely, the students on the GNVQ Business programmes, although in favour of the course, were of the opinion that their educational programmes were easier than GCSEs and A Levels (with a third of the respondents holding the opposing point of view); GCSEs and A Levels were marginally seen as the better preparation for HE but GNVQs were conclusively seen as the best form of preparation for the world of work. What must be noted here is that young adults in general are susceptible to media coverage so the possibility of them adopting the commonly espoused opinion and advertising rhetoric may have influenced their responses, particularly when the individual has little or no experience of the alternative educational systems to which GNVQs were compared, such as A Levels.

The inclusion of Key Skills elements into the GNVQ programme was seen as a positive approach which has since been advocated in academic programmes such as A Levels (Dearing 1996). They were seen as the transferable element of a GNVQ programme that provided breadth to a vocationally specific area - breadth that was considered sufficient and did not warrant the inclusion of any further Mandatory Key Skills. The current Key Skills were seen as being able to assist individual students in coping with the academic side of a GNVQ, with the development of study skills; both of which were seen as necessary for progression either to university or into the world of work. This was the most positive possible outcome; it was the considered opinion of the majority of the respondents that this could be achieved with greater ease if separate classes were provided for Key Skills development rather than their total integration into the Mandatory units.

Competence-based (such as NVQs) and performance-based (such as GNVQs) programmes have been the subject of much debate and have come under attack since their inception in 1986 and 1992 respectively; most notably by Smithers (1993), Hyland (1993, 1994a&b) and Wolf (1990). One central theme of this criticism has focused on the possible detraction from underpinning knowledge and understanding when implementing a competence-based system. The survey indicated that competence was believed to mean more than mere skill attainment; it was equated with skills and knowledge. The common opinion was that to 'do' something required some degree of understanding (degrees which varied by sub-group); it was not thought possible to carry out a task if students were unaware of its implications. This was verified in the fact that students on the GNVQ programme were required to apply their knowledge and understanding to



their specialist vocational areas; this was seen as a distinct advantage when compared to A Levels.

Where the questionnaire responses did correspond to the criticisms made by Smithers (1993), Hyland (1993, 1994a&b) and Wolf (1990) was with the issue of depth attainment in a programme of study. The breadth of subjects in a GNVQ were thought to promote a broad, general education; the students were considered competent in a wide variety of situations. However, in those subjects concern was expressed about covering the Performance Criteria (which in themselves were seen as prescriptive and mechanical and detrimental to depth attainment) in a superficial way; the students would have knowledge of a variety of topics and subjects, but misgivings were expressed about the possibility of students knowing very little about each of these topics and subjects; competence was seen to detract from depth of knowledge. This was seen to be a possibility if students were solely directed to achieving the Performance Criteria and little else. Potentially breadth, generated out of the vast number of Performance Criteria, was seen to be at the expense of depth. However, the majority of those concerned with implementation of GNVQs held the belief that, in the best practice, depth and understanding were integral to the course, even though they were not specified. In addition, and in line with the criticism expressed about competence attainment, a further area of concern involved the issue of externally set and marked end of unit tests. These were viewed with some suspicion by those implementing the GNVQ programmes. The main concern was that the testing of 'facts' was considered to be in direct opposition to developmental, performance-based outcomes of a GNVQ programme.

Consensus over what constitutes a liberal education and, to a lesser degree general education, is hard to come by; this study was no exception. A general education was equated to the coverage of a wide range of material through which the student was encouraged to question facts and develop an inquiring mind. A liberal education was concerned with those processes that broadened the mind and freed the person from narrow thought. In both instances some concern was expressed about defining such broad concepts by a limited number of statements, in that both of the educational paradigms were seen to be far reaching and encompassing many varied aspects that were not quantified but will be subject to further investigation.

The next issue was whether GNVQs had any of the qualities perceived in these educational ideals. GNVQs were seen as being able to offer a general education due to the wide range of subjects studied on a GNVQ programme; the vocational nature of a GNVQ was not thought to detract from this. GNVQs were also thought to be able to provide greater breadth than the A Levels alternative, in this instance the A Level in Business & Finance.

With regard to GNVQs' ability to offer a liberal education, this was seen as a distinct possibility providing the best practice was implemented and individual students were encouraged to question facts. However, to ensure that a liberal education was achieved through GNVQs students should also be encouraged to think for themselves, a process that was not thought to be evident at the time of the investigation. Furthermore, GNVQs were not seen to broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought - a

prerequisite of liberal education.

The core belief of the respondents was that a liberal education was an individual's right throughout the whole of their studies and that it was necessary to prepare post-16 students for facets of their future life. There was some accord that a general education would be sufficient but the argument in favour of a liberal education was better supported. The concern that arises out of such findings is that GNVQs were more readily equated to a general education, with a liberal education being only a possibility - what then if a general education is not adequate for individuals' future progression? Such concerns will be developed in the following chapter.

The comparison of GNVQs and A Levels was made. A Levels were seen to offer a liberal and a general education by a greater percentage of the respondents when compared to GNVQs. (A point that must be drawn here is that the results were by no means conclusive as the largest majority accounted for only 32% of the group with many of the respondents abstaining.)

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQ implementation was seen to be a distinct advantage of the system and to help in the development of confidence, independence and individual responsibility; it was also seen to help maintain student interest and motivation. Questions that will be addressed in the following chapter will revolve around the ability of the student centred approach and its potential to contribute to a liberal education.

### **GNVQ Business in Context**

The central, and over arching, themes to come out of the attitudinal survey follow, for the main part, the hypothesis generated out of the initial exploratory interviews, adding validity to the findings. In order to generate further affirmation of these results requires that the data be compared to the information produced in the curriculum criticism and the ideal type analysis; corroboration, where appropriate, will strengthen and vindicate the line of reasoning taken.

### **Comparison with the Curriculum Profile**

GNVQs were introduced as part of the attempt to provide standardisation of the vocational education system but also in an attempt to bridge the so-called 'academic divide' between academic programmes such as A Levels, and competence programmes such as NVQs. GNVQs were seen as the middle ground, encompassing theoretical elements that were concerned with a broad vocational area, limiting specialisation. Underpinning knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics were aims; transferable skills in the form of Key Skills were also main features, the inclusion of which was to promote greater breadth in vocational education allowing a student to progress into a variety of future career paths.

The research findings indicate that GNVQs, on the whole, were seen as a valid and valued addition to post-16 educational provision which have the ability to redress the academic divide as they were seen as demanding programmes of study when



compared to A Levels; they were seen as being equally hard as A Level programmes (although the staff concerned with this stage of the research were more convinced of this than the students). GNVQs were seen as an excellent preparation for work and an acceptable preparation for HE and university; A Levels were thought of as the better route when pursuing HE. Such attitudes may change when GNVQ students have actually completed HE courses and there is some data in support of such progression; the FEFC (1995) does, however, already suggest that GNVQ applicants for HE courses are positively received and that the standard achieved by such applicants is comparable to students who have followed the traditional HE route of A level study.

The competence issue has more in common with NVQ programmes but is sometimes related to GNVQs (Smithers 1993) due in part to their performance-based nature and the required achievement of the Performance Criteria. The Performance Criteria, as part of a GNVQ, are supposed to be an indication of what each GNVQ student is able to express and are there to ensure that the full range of a given topic is covered. In line with one of the objectives behind GNVQs and the inclusion of Performance Criteria the field research findings suggest that GNVQ students were competent in a wide variety of subjects and had acquired both skill, knowledge and understanding surrounding given topics. The wide range was seen to be promoted by the Performance Criteria whereas the knowledge and understanding was illustrated by the student in their application of the abstract to their chosen vocational field. However, some concern was expressed by the respondents in this area: the Performance Criteria were considered prescriptive, mechanical and detrimental to the attainment of depth of knowledge and understanding - points which have much in common with the criticism levied at NVQs and competence-based programmes. The concern was that, although students studying for a GNVQ, in this instance that of Business, cover a wide variety of subjects and topics, the question of whether such skills, knowledge and understanding was, in fact, superficial, was raised.

Breadth, a supposed central point to GNVQs, was seen to be achieved due in part to the number of subjects studied and the number of Performance Criteria for each of those subjects. The inclusion of Key Skills, considered a vital element of GNVQ provision by NCVQ and constantly under review, was designed as nationally determined personal transferable skills. Those of Communication, Information Technology and Application of Number were seen as mandatory, with the Key Skills of Working with Others and Improving own Learning and Performance identified as additional units and that of Problem Solving still under review. In line with the rationale for including Key Skills in post-16 education provision those involved with this study agreed that they were a vital part of the GNVQ; they were seen as the transferable element of a GNVQ which provided breadth to the vocational programme. This was supported by the idea that Key Skills assisted students with the development of study skills, with the academic or theoretical side of the GNVQ programme and with whatever future progression they undertook, whether it was into employment or onto HE.

The student centred nature of GNVQs was favourably received by those implementing the courses, and those studying them. Students were asked to undertake a variety of approaches to their work. In line with the original intention such approaches were seen

to develop student confidence, independence and individual responsibility; it was also a factor that was considered a central element of providing breadth in education. The student centred approach, as advocated in GNVQ implementation, is said to include a variety of activities. BTEC (1993c p.42) identified a number of activities including case studies, role plays, work placements, individual and group work, projects, assignments and report writing, as well as such activities as planning and organising events and designing products and services. The research findings indicate that such approaches and methods are undertaken by the students to a greater degree of satisfaction than perhaps a straight lecture programme would provide.

### **In Relation to the Ideal Types**

GNVQs are clearly vocational in their conception whereby their initial focus is that of preparation for a broad career area. In line with the vocational ideal type, which typifies the vocational as being of utilitarian pragmatic assumptions, knowledge attainment in a GNVQ is concerned with that which can be used as an instrument for individual (and perhaps latterly and subsequently national) progression and life enhancement.

The inclusion of a series of Key Skills, tagged personal transferable skills, is seen to add breadth to the vocational area of study by those designing the courses, those implementing them and the students who follow such programmes, suggesting some element of general education to a GNVQ. Further testimony to general education elements in a GNVQ is the status given to personal experience and development, which have instrumental, subjectivist overtones, as outlined in the general education ideal type.

The approach to GNVQ implementation adds further confirmation to the connection of GNVQs to vocational education and general education. The focus on the application of knowledge and understanding to the 'real world' and the world of work, and the inclusion of Key Skills make this fairly apparent. The teaching and learning methods, combined with the assessment techniques, which monitor and reward planning, information seeking and handling, evaluation aspects as well as the quality of the work, give further corroboration to general and vocational aspects.

In line with the information generated out of the ideal type analysis, briefly sketched above, the research findings show that a general education was equated to breadth of knowledge, the ability to question facts and develop an inquiring mind. It was these qualities that rendered GNVQs general in their educational approach, by the interview and questionnaire respondents, the vocational bias not seen as detracting from this. The required application of abstract knowledge to the chosen vocational area, along with the various methods students were required to undertake in the completion of their work, and the wide range of subjects studied and the number of Performance Criteria, were all seen to contribute positively to the general education orientation of GNVQs.

With regard to the common perception of liberal education confusion was apparent. Little or no consensus existed among the field research cohort at this stage of the investigation. This may well have been the fault of the statements included on the attitudinal survey as a large percentage of the respondents expressed concern over



limiting such a broad concept (however defined) to two or three all encompassing statements; greater scope was asked for - what that scope should include was not specified. However, elements of liberal education were seen to include, amongst other things, a broadening of the mind to free the individual from narrow thought. In relation to GNVQs liberal education was not seen to be an outcome: they were not thought to broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought; students were not thought to be encouraged to think for themselves in any great way.

In a more positive light the common perception was that, in the best practice, over the period of the GNVQ programme, and possibly more towards the end of the programme of study, the students were encouraged to question facts rather than just accept them, and as such a liberal education to some degree was thought to be a possibility, if not a reality at the time of the investigation. This information corresponds to that generated out of the ideal type analysis combined with the GNVQ curriculum profile which indicated that certain aspects of a GNVQ were potentially liberal in the approach to education. In this instance the inclusion of personal transferable skills, the student centred approach, the focus on problem solving abilities and the open-ended nature to a GNVQ programme were seen to offer great potential for liberal education overtones.

GNVQs overall, and GNVQ Business in particular, can be seen to have strong vocational and general education tendencies; it may also have the potential to fulfil certain liberal education criteria even though such potential may not yet have been met. The concern here is that it was liberal education that was seen, by the majority of field work respondents, to be every individual's right throughout their education; it was liberal education that was considered necessary in preparing post-16 individuals for their life in general (of which work must play a large role). A general education was viewed favourably but to a lesser degree than when compared to liberal education. Problems that this raises surround the belief that GNVQs offer a valid and valuable form of vocational and general education but it is liberal education (however defined) that was seen to be the most appropriate way forward in post-16 educational provision - issues that will be the focus of attention in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6 - GNVQs IN THE LIGHT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION**

### **Introduction**

When researching the philosophy of education 'liberal education' is a frequently used term which is applied to many different situations - no two of which are the same. Definitions abound in literature - as the previous chapters have shown, finding any consensus is problematic. In some cases general education is used interchangeably with liberal education; on the other hand there are many who do not consider the two to be synonymous at all but in fact very distinct. Finding, then, a definitive definition or description of either liberal or general education is onerous. However, when trying to critique differing paradigms of education many of the same descriptors were implemented in an attempt to classify each paradigm. Some of these descriptors were used for one or more paradigms thus causing further confusion. In line with this the initial field research (see Chapter 5 - GNVQ Business Field Research) also gave a strong indication that confusion exists amongst tutors and students over definitions of liberal and general education.

If a definitive outline of what can be said to be a liberal and general education is obtained a further question emerges: that of whether GNVQs, being vocational, also offer some form of liberal or general education however defined: an issue which this research seeks to address. In an attempt to do so, further interviews were deemed necessary. Initially this involved seven key players in the development of current post-16 education <sup>14</sup>. To check and ensure the validity of the findings generated out of this set of interviews a further set of interviews with staff and students <sup>15</sup> concerned with GNVQ Business at Advanced Level was also conducted.

### **Interviews with Educationalists and Industry Representatives**

#### **Rationale**

The educationalists and representatives from industry, from a variety of backgrounds, were selected for this section of the field research due to their concern with GNVQs and their place in the 16-19 education sector.

The interviews were part of an attempt to clarify just what was seen to constitute each paradigm of liberal and general education at this point in time. A set of commonly used adjectives was drawn up<sup>16</sup>, a list that was by no means exhaustive. The descriptors were those commonly found in literature trying to typify liberal and general education. Some of these descriptors were used for both paradigms, others directly related to either liberal or general education. The

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<sup>14</sup> The educationalists and industry representatives involved with this stage of the research and the interview schedule are listed in appendix 16 and 17 respectively

<sup>15</sup> Listings of the institutions involved at this stage of the study along with the schedule for the interviews can be found in appendix 21 and 22 respectively

<sup>16</sup> A list of the adjectives used as descriptors for liberal and general education can be found in appendix 19



interviewees were asked to indicate which of these descriptors they considered to be related to liberal and/or general education, going part way to defining what each paradigm was seen to mean in broad terms. The interviewees were then asked how they personally would define liberal education and general education. With these two broad outlines in mind the aim of the interviews was to try to establish what those involved in the study considered necessary in education for 16 - 19 year olds, bringing to the fore the issue of GNVQs. Were any of the perceived necessary attributes present in GNVQs? Should they be? This allowed GNVQs to be discussed in terms of liberal education, general education and vocational education.

The findings, outlined below, go some way to providing a distinction between liberal and general education.

## The Findings

### The Descriptors <sup>17</sup> - Liberal Education

The central and most convincing attributes that this study has found to be characteristic of a liberal education include the following: the most popular traits attributed to liberal education, by nearly all the interviewees (six out of seven), were **cultural inheritance** via the **cultivation of the intellect** implementing **critical analysis** and **emancipatory** methods; secondly, aspects concerned with **moral conscience**, **political awareness** and, to a certain degree, **self awareness**, all of which are bound within a **social critique**, were seen to be embodied in a liberal education by most of the respondents (five of seven) equating such attributes to it; the majority of the participants (four) were of the opinion that both **values** and **beliefs** were also part of a liberal education which would enable the individual to appreciate beauty and good (**aesthetics**). Further qualities concerned with the processing of knowledge were also considered as important to those involved in the study when typifying liberal education. The **development of an inquiring mind** through **independent thinking** and **reflection** were thought to lead to the ability to make **informed judgments** - all of which were seen as essential elements of a successful liberal education. Such qualities were considered essential in developing **social awareness** - another desired outcome of liberal education. To a lesser degree, the ability to **separate knowledge from opinion** in the hope of achieving **intellectual excellence** was seen by some of the participants (three) as possibly being a concern of liberal education. Similarly, **creativity** was also a possibility in a liberal education. This was further qualified; the actual topic or subject being studied was thought to have some influence on the inclusion of creativity.

### The Descriptors - General Education

**Breadth in education** and the **application of that knowledge** and **underpinning knowledge and understanding**, supplemented and assisted by **reflection**, were all seen to be focal to general education with nearly all the group holding this belief. Similarly, nearly all the respondents considered **self**

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<sup>17</sup> Actual response rates to the descriptors can be found in appendix 20

**awareness** as central to the education an individual received as a general education. Building on the first set of criterion, **team work** and **critical analysis** were deemed central to general education in the hope of **developing an inquiring mind** and therein allowing the individual to make **informed judgments**. Following on from self awareness was the aim to develop and promote **social awareness**. Such qualities were thought by most of the respondents to be pivotal to general education. Furthermore, not only was breadth of education a priority but so was **depth of understanding** with the majority equating such an aim with general education. Along side this was developing in the student the ability of **data analysis**. Throughout general education there was seen to be an awareness of one's surroundings. Subsequently, **economic awareness** was also seen by the majority of the group to be of importance in general education. Less obvious qualities of a general education, but still mentioned by some, were such aspects of **intellectual excellence** developed through **independent thinking** and perhaps even through **specialisation**. **Values**, **political awareness** and **creativity** along with **social critique** were again possible outcomes of a general education, but there was less agreement on these.

### **The Descriptors - Shared Values**

As can be seen there are certain distinctions that have been made between the two modes of education. That is perhaps the easiest way to try and differentiate between them. Complications emerge where a number of qualities and attributes were considered important in both paradigms. For the most part this was quantified by the respondent saying *"to a lesser degree"*, but the issue became clouded.

Out of this study the central shared values of liberal and general education were seen as follows: both liberal and general education were seen to hold **self and social awareness** and **reflection** in high regard and as absolutely imperative to their success; equally, **critical analysis** was seen as central to both modes of education, as was the ability of the individual to make **informed judgments**. Such qualities would then allow the individual to progress. **Independent thinking** and the **development of an inquiring mind** were seen as pivotal to both liberal and general education. In doing so both modes of education hope to instil an appropriate set of social **values**. **Intellectual excellence** is another shared value. Surprisingly, it was not considered a high priority for either liberal nor general education, with some (three of seven) respondents placing it in either variable.

A summary of the qualities attributed to liberal and/or general education can be found in Fig.22 Qualities of Liberal and General Education. Where qualities are placed in liberal education and general education categories they are placed in order of priority, the first being more easily equated to the ideal and the last related to the ideal but less strongly.



Fig. 22 Qualities of Liberal and General Education

Liberal Education	Shared Values	General Education
Cultural Inheritance	Self and Social Awareness	Breadth in Education
Cultivation of the Intellect	Reflection	Application of Knowledge
Critical Analysis	Analysis	Underpinning Knowledge and Understanding
Emancipatory	Informed Judgments	Reflection
Moral Conscience	Development of an Inquiring Mind	Self Awareness
Political Awareness	Independent Thinking	Team Work
Self Awareness	Cultivation of the Intellect / Intellectual Excellence	Critical Analysis
Social Critique		Development of an Inquiring Mind
Values		Informed Judgments
Beliefs		Social Awareness
Aesthetics		Depth of Understanding
Development of an Inquiring Mind		Data Analysis
Independent Thinking		Economic Awareness
Reflection		Independent Thinking
Informed Judgments		

**The Interviews**

Having used a variety of sources to develop a set of commonly used adjectives in discussions surrounding ‘education’ the next stage required that these adjectives be compared to individual perceptions of the phenomena of liberal and general education <sup>18</sup> and their relationship (if it exists) to GNVQs being established.

**Broader Perceptions of Liberal Education**

A point to come out of these interviews, and very strongly so, was that liberal education was very hard to characterise; it was seen as intangible and concerned with the individual as opposed to a prescribed or set curriculum or syllabus and with self-development and self-growth. As a representative from an examining body saw it:

*“it’s very much associated with the development of the individual person and broader things ..... it’s something that’s very useful .... the chance to engage with things that are outside a subject ... arts, music and politics and things.”*

Similarly, a respondent concerned with curriculum implementation suggested:

<sup>18</sup> The questions posed in this series of interviews can be found in appendix 18

*“Liberal education ... focuses more on the development of the individual. Self-development of the individual, the individualisation process, .... the ability to develop uniqueness ... and enable that person to think as freely as possible but still making use of other knowledge.”*

Self-development played a focal role when those interviewed tried to define what they saw as liberal education. Another common denominator was ‘knowledge’; the view of an academic from the realm of education on the subject being:

*“Development of knowledge and understanding considered valuable by a society. .... It would be concerned with what we think is valuable for a person, any person, to know and to believe and to think about.”*

This was also the opinion of one of the industry representatives:

*“... knowledge for knowledge’s sake, trying to get over a rule or aesthetic or moral principles. It’s like the old fashioned way of looking at education.”*

These dual functions of knowledge and self-development, identified as concerns of a liberal education, are in line with the ideal type of liberal education set out in the Ideal Type Analysis of Chapter three; liberal education was associated with the humanistic objective where the art of right conduct and the ‘good life’ were pivotal and the knowledge objective where the development and the cultivation of the intellect through an inquiring mind was paramount. Although in line, as one would expect, with the accepted knowledge there was little substance in the way of greater explanations of what such terms as ‘self-development’ and ‘knowledge’ actually entail giving significance to the problem of a definitive explanation of what a liberal education means today.

To probe this issue, and by way of an attempt to clarify just what constitutes self development and knowledge in a liberal education, these responses develop greater depth when they are considered with the responses to the ‘prompt sheet’ that was initially shown to the interviewees.

Liberal education was identified as being concerned with aspects such as self awareness bound up with values, beliefs and moral conscience, and social, political and cultural awareness. All of these factors can be seen as enabling the individual to become more fully aware of what is happening in their immediate environment and in a broader context thereby facilitating their individual development.

Equally, liberal education was associated with cultivation of the intellect through the development of an inquiring mind where independent thought and reflection would allow the individual to make informed decisions and choices, separating knowledge from subjective opinion; factors bound up with the knowledge objective. Such mind training when combined with the self-development aspects was perceived as being able to allow the individual to make sense of the world in which they function: *“liberal education as well as looking at the knowledge is trying to make use of that knowledge to make a better person ...”* said one individual concerned



with curriculum implementation.

### **Broader Perceptions of General Education**

If liberal education was seen as being concerned with individual development and knowledge what then was thought to be involved in a general education?

General education was identified as being wide ranging in terms of the subjects studied, breadth was said to be integral. Initially responses related general education to 5 - 16 schooling where it was seen as *"almost an entitlement"* (curriculum implementer), where a level of basic understanding and a broad education was seen as a fundamental requirement to enable the individual to function properly in society in the future.

*"I would have thought that the in-phrase of Core Skills ... was very much an area of general education."*  
(Industry representative)

This was then extended to encompass preparation for the world of work which was identified as an essential ingredient: *"preparing people for the world of work as opposed to acting in it"* is how one curriculum implementer saw it .

*"general education in a way it's a bit of a misnomer because I think what is meant by a general education is very much data collection about a specific subject even though it says general. ... gaining knowledge about a particular area, maybe not a specific area, but a particular area."*  
(Industry representative)

Subsequently, it was seen by the industry representatives and a respondent from an awarding body as *"more applied"*, requiring that individuals were not only in possession of the necessary underpinning knowledge and understanding, but that they could also accurately apply that knowledge to a given situation through critical analysis. It was seen to be concerned with *"the productivity of the individual .... the possibility of using that individual as a useful producer"* (curriculum implementer); economic awareness as well as social awareness being vital.

### **The Dichotomy of Liberal and General Education**

In trying to differentiate between liberal and general education it became evident that the two paradigms were seen to have some shared values. What became important was whether there was anything that made them distinct from each other, or were the respondents equating them as the same thing.

The main line of argument to come out of these interviews was that the reason that liberal and general education were perceived as having some of the same values was that education *per se* was, or should be, progressive. If this is the case qualities and attributes of one paradigm will be built on and further developed in the next. In this instance the stronger line of argument followed the belief that what was developed throughout a general education would be further enhanced in a liberal education.

- *"it's a liberal education that's taken, sort of, that one step further."*  
(Industry representative)

*"liberal education doesn't function on its own, it needs some kind of raw material and raw material is the general education."*  
(Curriculum implementer)

*"It (general education) wouldn't be liberal because I think you would need something in addition to make up your educational programme."*  
(Awarding Body representative)

*"..... it's like general education is the first step and the second level could involve liberal education. ... Liberal education is almost going beyond that step (general education), it's trying to promote these free thinking abilities and the ability to take a step back from all this knowledge that exists and think about it from different angles, from various perspectives. ... so as to come up with new ways of looking at things which were not necessarily the ways which were inculcated on this person through the general education."*  
(Curriculum implementer)

Conversely, attention must be drawn to an alternative perspective as expressed by the academic of the group:

*"A general education is perhaps broader, a bigger umbrella than liberal. It (liberal education) would cover most of the same ground but general might also need to have things like economic awareness, specialisation, more practical elements, more life-related perhaps, if not job-related."*

Here note that the distinction made, though in direct opposition to the majority of those interviewed; general education was seen to expand what was thought to be developed in a liberal education, giving education a more applied focus; applied to life and life-skills, which must in today's society include some aspect of the world of work.

### **Essential Qualities for 16 - 19 Education**

Having teased out some of the differences between liberal and general education, the next stage was to ascertain which was considered essential for educational programmes aimed at 16 - 19 year olds in modern times.

In broad terms those qualities that were deemed important and essential for 16 -19 educational programmes covered, in essence, aspects of self-development: *"some attempt to make a rounder person" "the ability to think independently"* (industry representatives) , the current mandatory key skills present in GNVQs but also greater focus on the key skills of *"problem solving, the independent learning skills, the interpersonal skills"* (curriculum implementer) and *"team work"* (industry representative) . These were thought to go at least part of the way in helping to develop individuals that could take *"responsibility for their actions in a kind of wider sociopolitical context ...and make sense of the world"* (curriculum implementer). In order to achieve this a *"broad-based, personal social and intellectual development"* (FE manager) was identified as the way forward, a facet of which required *"political awareness"* (curriculum implementer and FE manager). An outline such as this embodies the essence of what has been identified as



equating to a liberal education.

Juxtaposed to this was a focus on the world of work. This was seen to require such skills as *“people skills”* (industry representative), *“reflection”* (industry representative and curriculum implementer), as well as the necessary *“practical skills”*, *“underpinning knowledge and understanding”* (industry representatives) and the ability to apply that knowledge. All these factors combined to demand breadth in education which was identified as best represented (by five of the seven respondents from both industry and education backgrounds) by the French Baccalaureate system:

*“the idea of the Baccalaureate .... enable the individual to have as much information, as much training that will help him as a person and also will help in for his future career, so to speak. So you could see things that would be useful to the individual ..... future usefulness or utility from an industrial sense.”*  
(Curriculum implementer)

A focus such as this has strong overtones of what has been identified as concerns of a general education. The inclusion of aspects related to the world of work also brings elements of a vocational education to the fore.

If all the identified essential qualities are combined to highlight what a educational programme for 16 - 19 year olds would involve we have perhaps the best of each of the educational paradigms of the liberal, the general and the vocational. What must be recognised is that a split in the response rates can be seen here. Those respondents from the realm of education were more strongly in favour of the inclusion of, and greater attention to, those self-development aspects that can be related back to liberal education provision. It was the representatives from industry who called for the more practical and more general aspects; skills that were perceived as been able to help the individual in the working environment. The focus was not solely placed on practicality, it also called for the inclusion of interpersonal or *“people skills”*.

Having identified certain essential qualities that were deemed necessary by the respondents for 16 - 19 year old educational programmes the question of how well GNVQs were seen to meet these requirement has to be addressed. Initially, this involved asking the respondents if they could see any of the desired criteria in GNVQs. This was followed by questions relating to GNVQs' ability to offer a general and or liberal education.

The question of whether GNVQs have the ability to meet the previously specified essential qualities brought mixed responses. A strength of GNVQs, in terms of meeting some of the essential qualities for a 16 - 19 educational provision, was seen to lie in approaches to teaching and learning: *“I think much more so than for instance A Levels. ... Because of the way that they are taught and assessed”* (industry representative):

*“...the GNVQ focuses learning .... it puts a lot of onus on the individuals who are studying the course to gather information, assess*

*-it and work with it and it doesn't rely on them being stuck with knowledge for two years and then regurgitating it on two half days in May or June, because that's what A Levels do in my opinion and if you've got a photographic memory or if you're good at retaining a lot of factual information, then you're inherently going to do well at the A Level. If you're not good at retaining information and you get bored by sitting listening to lecturers and being given piles of notes thrust in your direction, you're not going to do well at A Levels."*  
(Industry representative)

The teaching and learning methods were seen to develop the ability to work in teams, to develop oral communication skills through presentations and group discussions and in terms of data collection and analysis. The Key Skills of application of number, communication and IT were identified as adding greater breadth to the system, a factor which was seen to be of increasing importance.

*"from the point of view of general education the Core Skills application of number and communication and IT clearly have the capacity to improve standards of general education."*  
(Curriculum implementer)

A further strength was identified as the grading themes, which were thought to allow students to develop the ability to make informed judgments about their work:

*"work out why something's valid or invalid and I think that's being able to separate knowledge."*  
(Awarding body representative)

However, there was caution expressed about this:

*"in terms of planning and problem-solving, the graded part of the curriculum, in that sense I suppose they are, but I think it's done in a very contrived way .... It's not necessarily as tangible as that."*  
(FE manager)

A further weakness of the GNVQ system, and seen as being detrimental in terms of meeting the essential qualities, concerned the perceived need for a greater range of knowledge and understanding, with reference given to values and social issues, along with the call for a GNVQ syllabus: *"I think a syllabus for the vocational content of it ... like the technical Baccalaureate"* (academic).

### **Does a Vocational Bias Preclude Liberal or General Education?**

The question was raised whether the vocational nature of GNVQs, however broad-based, meant that a liberal or even a general education was an impossibility. The overall trend was that such a bias did not automatically preclude liberal or general education from taking place, however the consensus was that it was more likely to include general overtones as opposed to liberal ones:

*"I would say it would be quite difficult to make it liberal in the way we define it today but I don't see any reason why it couldn't be general."*  
(Industry representative)

Concern was expressed over the specialised nature of any educational programme being detrimental in attaining a liberal and/or a general education. It was not the vocational nature of an educational programme that meant that a liberal



or general education was unachievable, but in fact narrowness and specialisation, the exclusion of breadth in the subjects studied:

*"I think it does if it's specialised. ... I think anything specialised, it doesn't matter what type of qualification, if it's an A Level, an extremely narrow pure A Level, it would give them some problem solving ideas. But, it wouldn't give them anything else and I think we often see this in very academic people ..... they often have difficulty in relating to people, showing social skills and things and I don't think you lose it because of something vocational, you lose it because it's something too narrow vocationally or too narrow academically."*  
(Awarding body representative)

Vocational education was not seen automatically to exclude liberal or general education. This was thought to be the case in "certain extremes" if, for example, the option of building such things as a foreign language and key skills (IT, application of number and communication) were not taken up but were ignored (industry representative).

A stronger and more damning reservation was expressed by the academic of the cohort, who was in agreement with the majority in that a vocational bias to any educational programme would necessarily preclude a liberal or a general education from being achieved. In theory this was recognised as perfectly plausible in reality, however, it was not seen to be so:

*"vocational education should build on liberal/general education and maybe in some areas it does .... in theory there's no incompatibility, but whether GNVQs and other vocational qualifications are in fact underpinned by a liberal approach in practice or a general approach is doubtful, probably not; not very much compared to other models in other countries."*

### **Liberal Education, General Education and GNVQs**

In theory, at least, the vocational nature of GNVQs was not seen to mean that a liberal or general education was unattainable. Could GNVQs, therefore, realistically be said to be offering a liberal education albeit with a vocational edge? Or a general education? Or were they seen as purely vocational to the exclusion of all else?

In terms of whether GNVQs had the potential to offer a liberal and/or a general education mixed opinions were registered. The FE manager, being the most positive, did not see any problems with compatibility between liberal, general and vocational education being attained in a single programme: *"I think they'd be perfectly compatible, I do."* Alternatively, one respondent was of the opinion that GNVQs are "not liberal or general" (academic). Overall stronger ties were seen to be with general education:

*"They're clearly closer to general education"*  
(Industry representative)

*"They're not vocational. I think they're general knowledge, a general education and it's applied to the context. When I said they're not vocational, they're not vocational in the sense that they're going to get someone a job ..... What they're there for is to provide underpinning"*

*-knowledge and understanding .... So I think they're a general education but with a focus on a particular area but I don't certainly see it as training."*

(Awarding body representative)

*I think that GNVQs are probably general - both in content but also in terms of the assessment."*

(Curriculum implementer)

Reasons that were given for equating GNVQs to a general education included their breadth or range of subjects studied, the key skills along with the point that *"evaluation and developing the critical analysis, awareness of students"* (Awarding body representative) were seen as included in a GNVQ programme. In backing up the line of thought that GNVQs were more closely in tune with the aims and objectives of a general education the representative from an awarding body suggested that:

*"I think things like moral conscience, emancipatory, values and all those things, don't know whether it's the job of every single qualification to do that and I think it's very difficult to imagine how you could develop .... awareness of things..."*

This was further expanded by one of the industry representatives:

*"I wouldn't have thought liberal. I would have thought that quite a lot of the elements were general .... I think certainly far more general than liberal. There isn't the depth in a GNVQ. They don't go into any of the subject matter in sufficient depth to cover many of the things .... like cultivation of the intellect and pure knowledge, critical analysis, aesthetics and beliefs."*

A liberal education within GNVQs was not totally excluded. The potential for some aspects of a liberal education in a GNVQ was seen to be there, if not yet fully recognised:

*"I would have thought GNVQs quite easy to encompass many of the things we would put into a definition of general education, quite difficult to encompass a lot of the things we would define as being in a liberal education, but not impossible."*

(Industry representative)

This potential was seen to be, primarily, in the way that individuals tackled their work and progressed through the course:

*"I think they should and I suppose I think it's the way students approach the work because of the sorts of skills that are encouraged in them when they're going through their GNVQ"*

(Awarding body representative)

Further potential was seen to depend on the actual GNVQ being studied. For example: health and social care and the inclusion of sex education and health studies; business where business ethics, trade union and collective bargaining, and employment issues could be studied.

### **Hypothesis: The Way Forward;**

#### **Liberal, General and/or Vocational Education?**

The overall theme of these interview findings suggested that GNVQs were not



originally designed as vehicles for liberal education and that nor should they have been. This was felt to be best fulfilled by A Levels (curriculum implementer). However, this was not thought to automatically rule out GNVQs offering some form of liberal education within the broad-based vocational programme. However, a problem that was recognised at this stage of the investigation revolved around one of the original aims behind the introduction of GNVQs: that of bridging the academic/vocational divide. To do this they must contain both a vocational and academic element; the concern being that a stronger focus given to either of these elements would mean that they would no longer be fulfilling their objectives:

*"GNVQs are always, you know, being put under the spotlight in a way that if you put other qualifications under the spotlight in the same way as GNVQs, I'm sure there would be a lot more criticism. The problem is because in many ways the GNVQs were put there to bridge the academic/vocational divide, one assumes there is always going to be some academic drift with GNVQs. .... I suppose it's actually saying I think we need some kind of liberal education in further education. If one tried to do that within GNVQs .... some people would see that then as watering it down and making it too broad-based."*

(FE manager)

Nevertheless, the overarching belief among the respondents was that individuals would in fact benefit from a more liberal if not general approach.

*"I think GNVQs would benefit from moving towards the liberal side of this equation."*

(Industry representative)

*".. at the very least, there should be a broader general education than there is now. ....I think we need some kind of liberal education in further education"*

(FE manager)

*"general education is the way forward because of the breadth and providing Core Skills and doesn't become focused."*

(Industry representative)

For GNVQs to attain something akin to a general education, or even a liberal education, a flexible programme of study was thought to be the way forward where the opportunity to balance the vocational with the general or liberal should be given. To achieve this there was a call for more units that were common to more than one GNVQ, allowing individuals to experience greater breadth in their studies (curriculum implementers). Such a broad-based nature to GNVQs was seen as a positive step forward in the provision of vocational courses; greater breadth would also be welcomed in terms of greater focus on personal development classes. In an attempt to add liberal overtones to a GNVQ personal development alone was not seen to be sufficient; 'values' were thought to warrant some attention:

*"values in the broadest sense, does seem to me that there's so much change of all kinds, cultural, social, economic and I do think that a reflection on this needs to be part of the curricula at all levels. Perhaps especially vocational curriculum. .... When people think about preparation for work, they only think about job related skills, not about person related skills which are crucial so I would include values there. And certainly there should be more of that in GNVQs and whether*

*-they're Core Skills, syllabus or a programme, it doesn't really matter."*  
(Academic)

Taking the focus away from the vocational had two opposing responses. The first of these, being positive, was that providers of 16 - 19 education would be able to focus on the *"learning experience"* (FE manager) rather than just the qualification. This in itself was seen to go some way to promoting liberal approaches to education, in that it would concentrate on developmental processes and methods of learning:

*"general education and liberal education are both kind of intertwined .... it's where you are getting that makes it liberal than where you are now."*  
(Curriculum implementer)

Such an approach would also counteract the criticism that, currently, *"GNVQs are too reliant on concepts such as mastering learning"* (curriculum implementer).

Alternatively, if GNVQs were broadened and the focus shifted from the vocational to the general or liberal, the concern was that a liberal and/or general focus to education for 16 - 19 year olds was not necessarily the 'best' way forward for students because *"in the terms of their ability to proceed it could be neither (liberal or general education) , because what would be valued isn't either of those things..."* (Awarding body representative). In addition to this, taking the option to study a vocational programme away from individuals was seen as being in direct opposition to any liberal onus:

*"I suspect if people have chosen then we ought to kind of give respect to that choice and let them focus on that issue or the issues in mind."*  
(Industry representative)

*"liberal can be seen as being about choice ... if you don't want to do it, it becomes illiberal."*  
(Curriculum implementer)

## **Further Interviews with Staff and GNVQ Students (2)**

### **The Rationale**

In February and March 1996 a series of interviews was conducted in six establishments offering GNVQ Business at Advanced Level: three further education colleges and three school sixth forms. Eighteen staff, including course coordinators, tutors responsible for the delivery of Mandatory Units and those concerned with Key Skills delivery, were involved in the study along with forty-four students. There were twenty-six on the first year and eighteen on the second year of the two year programme.

The purpose behind the interviews was to investigate what the GNVQ experience entails and what the staff and students concerned with the GNVQ Business at Advanced Level believe the students leave further education with - and whether this corresponds to the findings generated out of the interviews



conducted with those concerned with educational policy making and industry representatives concerned with training and development. Contrasts are drawn with A Level study and questions are raised about what staff and students want from educational programmes for young adults.

### **The Interviews**

A random sample from three further education colleges and three school sixth forms where GNVQ course coordinators, course leaders and those involved with the delivery of GNVQ Business along with students studying for the GNVQ Advanced Business were interviewed. Those studying at Intermediate level were not included in this sample group. Reasons for this were twofold: firstly, the comparisons of GNVQ Advanced with A Level programmes in terms of parity of esteem and intellectual rigour were not seen to relate to the Intermediate programme; and secondly, the notion of an academic/vocational divide was seen to be directed at the GNVQ Advanced Level, as opposed to the Intermediate Level.

The interview questions <sup>19</sup> differed slightly dependent upon whether students or those concerned with GNVQ delivery were the respondents. In both cases the questions fell into three broad areas: the breadth of study and whether a student learns something other than the required units of study; preparation for the future, including the world of work and human interactions; personal autonomy. All the interviews were in-depth, semi-structured and on-site and, with the permission of the respondents, all were recorded and later transcribed.

Staff interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The rationale for this revolved around the belief that it would be easier to raise issues that may be seen as 'difficult' whilst also ensuring confidentiality. Student interviews were conducted in groups of three, in a non-threatening environment such as the refectory or student common room. It was recognised that the views and responses of specific individuals would be hard to follow and that the group dynamics could affect individual contributions. The rationale for implementing these small group interviews appeared to outweigh the potential problems; the purpose and content of the interviews was explained to the students the contention being that they (the students) would feel more relaxed and with the support of their peers they would feel less intimidated than if they were alone. This would encourage them to raise issues that they believed important. Students were encouraged to ask questions in return, again to help them feel relaxed with the situation.

### **The Interview Findings**

#### **Broad-Based Study**

Does the GNVQ Business at Advanced Level provide a sufficient range of topics to ensure that students have an adequate business background upon completion of their course? With the exception of two groups, most students said " *Yes, it (GNVQ Advanced Business) covers everything .....It's what we want*". The

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<sup>19</sup> The questions posed to staff and students can be found in appendix 23/24 and 25 respectively

staff concurred with this; the range of subjects covered on the GNVQ Advanced Business was, for its broad vocational area, sufficient to furnish students with an adequate business background suitable for future progression, whether it be Higher Education or employment. It was thought to cover a *"breadth of subject areas"* which included every aspect of business *"that will hold them in good stead for Higher Education and employment, more so than A Levels"*.

A concern was expressed about the Performance Criteria which specify the outcomes that a student must meet. The Performance Criteria were seen as a form of check list for each unit of study and were seen to make a GNVQ too narrow if this alone was the range studied. It was the Performance Criteria that were seen to be to blame for the lack of breadth due to their perceived prescribed nature: *"It (GNVQs) should be a general education, but it isn't broad enough, it is too specific"*. But to further broaden the course so that a more general business education could be achieved was not the way that those interviewed wanted to see the GNVQ Business developing, as there was already thought to be sufficient material for the students to cope with. There was in any case the possibility of studying Additional Units.

The possibility of extending the range of the course to cover subject matter not necessarily related to business but of more general interest was not really considered a possibility by either the students or the staff interviewed. The opportunity for selecting options such as foreign languages covered most student preferences. This was in accord with the March 1996 Dearing Review which suggested that a foreign language should be incorporated into the Key Skills system as a mandatory requirement. With regard to broadening the course to make it less specialised and a more general education a division between the staff respondents was noted. Approximately two-thirds of the staff believed that students, by electing to take a vocational course, had selected a broad career path and should be allowed to pursue that area. Where this was the case they felt there should be greater emphasis on the Key Skills of Application of Number and Communication; *"they require greater depth not broadening it out any further .... to gain rigour and parity of esteem with A Levels"*. This, however, was not a popular option with the students. The Key Skills of Communication and Application of Number were thought to make the course much harder than it would be if they were not Mandatory Units. The majority of the student body interviewed expressed the desire to see them omitted completely. Conversely, students felt that the importance of IT should be further stressed and perhaps its range extended to cover *"more software and hardware so we know what to expect later on"*. Because of the importance placed on IT in the realm of business it was considered a vital part of the course. At this point in time it is not an element covered specifically in an A Level Business programme, for example, the Associated Examining Board (AEB) GCE A Level Business Studies (AEB 1994, pp.10 - 13).

The remaining third of the staff respondents were of the opinion that the course could be broader: *"Life and social skills are lacking. Where they are incorporated the range is poor"*. *"General studies as part of the core would help"*. Included in



this would be issues such as social awareness, economic awareness, cultural awareness and greater emphasis on European units including a mandatory foreign language. This would not only make the students more articulate, but more conversant in current affairs and the importance that such matters can have on their future.

### **Team Spirit**

Team work and working in groups were seen to be central elements of the GNVQ Advanced Business. Staff expressed positive opinions about these and saw them as strengths of GNVQs the focus given to developing *“interpersonal skills”*.

*“A social feel for working together ... and group work, more so than other courses.”*

The students also saw these aspects in a positive light:

*“You learn how to get on with people, and work in groups with strengths and weaknesses and problems. You learn to assess different people in each situation.”*

*“You have to get along with people regardless. Be easy going and just get on with it as you’ve got to work with them anyway.”*

Additional personal development identified by the students involved learning to *“hear other’s views and take them into consideration”*, by watching what was said, by being *“tactful”* but by also learning *“not to rely on anyone”*. Equally, the staff involved thought that the students *“learn to be tolerant of others and negotiate with each other”*, and realised that:

*“even if you dislike someone you still have to work with them. They also learn to take responsibility for their group and their work.”*

*“You must be accepting of other people’s opinions and beliefs.”*

A consequence of this was that the students were seen by those staff interviewed to develop effective team and group working skills, requiring the student to be *“flexible ..... adaptable”*, *“responsible ... and have a mature attitude”* towards their work developing *“trust and reliability”*. This was mirrored in almost all the student responses where they thought that the extensive focus on *“communication and presentation”* skills also meant that they *“develop confidence”*. Further enhancement of personal qualities concerned *“working with others ..... group work ..... and team work”*. *“The values of being in a team and working together”* were seen by the students to be important qualities that were also developed.

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQs was seen to be one of the main reasons for adopting, amongst other things, group and team work; a point which was favourably received by all respondents when compared to the didactic teaching methods often found in more academic courses.

### **Professionalism**

The common perception of the staff, in almost all cases, was that social skills were

developed as the students were regularly expected to talk to people from different groups, in different situations. Students were considered to have learnt the art of negotiation, of how to capitalise on strengths, weaknesses and individuality of group or team members. They took responsibility for their work and appreciated the need to put effort into assignments. Were the students then aware of how such factors can help in social or working situations? Could they transfer this understanding and use it to their advantage in other situations? Many of the institution's involved in the study said that they expected *"punctuality, motivation, commitment and the showing of enthusiasm"*, particularly because the course in question was business. They expected the students to adopt a business attitude *"where each lesson is seen as an appointment"*. Those students questioned thought that they learnt *"professionalism"* with regard to entering a working environment; the importance of punctuality and attendance and the presentation of both their work and themselves: *"you must be neat and tidy to give the right image ..... do as you're told, be reliable and trustworthy"*. *"Good behaviour, be polite, punctual, listen to what's said, pay attention and do what's asked"*.

Not one of the establishments visited allocated specific class time to addressing what may be considered acceptable behaviour in the work place. The general feeling was that the students learnt this through osmosis, whereby they followed the examples that were set by members of staff. The exception was when students were expected to go on a work placement as part of their course; this was seen, especially by the staff to help greatly. The students were thought to get a trial run of working life; to see *"theory in practice"*.

*"It is absolutely necessary. It is not just theory, on work experience they see the vocational aspects. They can 'see' what they study actually happening."*

*"It is an extension of the action plans ... They discover the discipline of work which is so different from college."*

Factors such as discipline, organisation skills, punctuality, were seen as benefits of the work experience system, as were *"dealing with problems and findings solutions"*. Prior to embarking on these work experiences the students were told about how important it was to *"have appropriate attitudes and dress, not to be slovenly, and how to address people properly"*. The importance of time keeping and being responsible was further stressed. So, irrespective of the fact that there appeared to be little formal input concerning business ethics and social etiquette, some guidance was given to the students. The value of developing such attitudes and qualities was that students learnt what were perceived to be essential skills for future use; skills such as time keeping, socialisation aspects, problem solving and the ability to organise oneself; skills which help in university or working life. However, work experience placements were not a specified part of A Levels - qualifications that are held up as the *"benchmark of academic excellence"*. (DE&S 1991, Foreword) - qualifications that are held to be more rigorous than GNVQs.



## **Interpersonal Skills**

Translating codes of behaviour for use in a social situation seemed an area almost untouched upon in the course of the GNVQ Business programme, according to the students. This was seen to depend on *“upbringing”, “common courtesy”,* or just knowing *“those things”; “you just know what you can and can’t do”* about *“how to act and behave towards other people”*. This was backed up by the staff responses; in no instance was social awareness or social behaviour covered. *“This is where we fall down. We fail to pick up on this”*. There was a belief that the students, through their time in the school sixth form or the further education college, did learn *“to appreciate the social norms, the things they have to do to conform to society”*. How this was taken on board by the students was thought by the staff to be accidental, either from class situations or from family or peer group situations. It was not an integral part of the GNVQ Business but was addressed on other GNVQ programme areas. It was, however, part of both the school sixth form and further education college general ethos whereby students were expected to *“respect other cultures, beliefs and individuality”*.

## **Developing Original Thinkers?**

The GNVQ Advanced Business was said to give a broad general overview of the realm of business. As we have seen the students were thought by their teachers to develop good communication skills, research and investigation skills and time management skills. Along side this they were considered to be responsible, mature and confident individuals, due to the programme of study they have undergone. Did the course also foster such attributes as initiative, creativity and analytical skills?

The GNVQ Advanced Business was seen by most of the staff respondents to go at least part way to addressing such abilities as working on one’s own initiative and making one’s own informed choices, being creative and imaginative in the way that work was tackled, in developing that work and deciding on the relevance of information by questioning and analysing the situation. Such a stance was qualified by the approaches students undertook in the completion of their work. For example, setting up small businesses, designing and producing material for sale, approaching organisations for information, conducting market research into the viability of an idea. The students were, for the main part, of the opinion that they had little option but to take the initiative when it came to completing their work.

*“The assignments only give you a rough outline of what you have to do so you have to work everything out yourself.”*

*“In all our assignments you have to choose your topic and do your own research. You become more involved and it’s more interesting.”*

The consensus among students was that initiative had to be taken if a grade of Merit or Distinction was to be achieved, in that all students interviewed expressed such an opinion. This would involve doing additional work and research in whatever form fitted the assignment brief. Staff also thought that student initiative was integral to the way a GNVQ programme was implemented. Initial guidance

from tutors dealing with basic information made students aware of the framework in which they had to work, which Performance Criteria they had to meet and the desired outcome. Then *"the onus is on the student; if they want a good grade they have to take the initiative", "they have to take responsibility for the direction and pace of their own work", "the students must be self-disciplined and make their own choices. The grading criteria measures this"*. So, the mechanisms appeared to be in place for the development of student initiative, specifically in the planning of their assignments. However, time appeared to be a problem. *"It's fairly prescriptive. Timing dictates this and it become restrictive"*. As students developed their time management skills they started to realise that the work was better completed if not left to the last minute. It was thought that the students got *"better at it the longer they're here"*.

Creativity, in terms of innovative ideas and designs, imagination and ingenuity in the way students complete their work was not seen to play such a large part in the GNVQ Advanced Business programme. Nearly all students involved in this study believed that it was the Performance Criteria that formed a block to creativity. *"You have to cover the Performance Criteria. There's no leeway"*. One staff interviewee, in line with the majority, expressed the opinion that a GNVQ was too prescriptive, that the Performance Criteria and range *"stifles creativity ..... it is anti-intellectual ..... original thinkers are disappearing"*. She went on to compare the work undertaken on a GNVQ Advanced programme to that of an A Level; she felt the A Level required far more independent thinking and creativity due to the open nature of the syllabus. However, when the students were asked about the sort of assignments that have been undertaken there did seem to be some scope for creativity. The use of different IT and computer packages along with the oral presentations were examples. Ways in which the students believed they had shown creativity and initiative included designing questionnaires, redesigning drinks cans, making videos, creating and selling a board game, running business ventures, chairing discussions, presentations including the use of IT and various visual aids such as the videos. This shows what staff summarised as *"they are expected to show initiative and creativity in coming to a solution"*. But *"it (creativity) should be there as they can use a variety of evidence ... There's lots of scope for creative thinking, lateral thinking, but it's never taken up", "some students just prefer to do the basics .... the majority"*. These findings are in line with the research undertaken by Issler and Fourali (1995).

In 1995, at a Higher Education Council conference, a comparison of the GNVQ Advanced Business and an A Level in Business was undertaken (Issler & Fourali - Research Department City & Guilds 1995). In this instance Issler & Fourali used the Nuffield GCE A Level in Business Studies, available through the University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations Board, as a comparison to the GNVQ Business. Issler & Fourali (1995) suggest that this was because:

*"it is the closest in style and philosophy to the GNVQ Advanced. Both approaches are modular, project oriented and the grading/levels of performance criteria are similar. The tendency towards the candidate driven approach to learning emphasises initiative and independence of mind."*



The demands between the two systems were seen to be very similar. The main area of difference identified (which support these research findings) was that the Nuffield approach specifically mentions the enhancement of creativity but the GNVQ Advanced Business did not. A further point of interest, which is also a concern in this study, was that the GNVQ Advanced Business provided the opportunity to study a foreign language, an aspect which was not included in the Nuffield approach.

If the majority of students were opting to do the minimum, then how well did they develop their work, what research did they undertake, how did they analyse such information, and how did they decide if it was relevant or not?

*"Initially they find it quite difficult but we build up to it. Research is the student's responsibility and the onus is on the student completely by the end of the course ..... They become selective. They learn to develop and use information as they progress to the second year."*

The Performance Criteria and range statements were guides that the students used for an indication of what to include in an assignment. *"There is a tendency to copy straight from books"*. However, due to the developmental nature of a GNVQ programme it was the belief of most of the staff concerned with this investigation that students did eventually learn to *"research in greater depth abstracting from the theory what is relevant"*, indicating that students did learn to question information for its relevance to the project/assignment in hand.

Overall, the GNVQ Advanced Business course was seen as progressive. It was seen to develop new skills. The popular belief amongst the staff and students was that the students developed greatly in the areas of time management and in developing extensive research, investigation and study skills and therein self-confidence. *"Enhancement of creative spirit, innovative spirit .... confidence .... and research skills..... To be in charge of their own learning and time management"*. The *"freedom to set own work and deadlines"* was important to the students as they realised that they had *"do work off your own back"* in order to complete the course. This was seen to require *"maturity"* and effective *"time management skills"*. These were not skills that staff thought most students had at the beginning of the course but the mechanisms were thought to be in place to foster such qualities and so they should be skills that can be taken with them from further education.

### **The 'Real World'**

Having benefited from a programme of study where time management, responsibility, maturity, research skills and initiative were seen to be an integral part of 16 - 19 education and where social and communication skills were developed, were these students ready for the 'real world'? Although students believed they were prepared for their role in the 'real world' due in part to the research and investigation skills they had developed and their increased confidence with regard to communication with others, staff were of the opinion that although their communication skills might be enhanced they were not aware of

current affairs to any great degree. The consensus was that students very rarely read a newspaper, let alone a 'quality' newspaper.

*"They don't have any background knowledge about current affairs, the economy, business or anything. They are totally naive ... They haven't got a clue."*

*"They're supposed to, but there's a great lack of understanding."*

This was thought to be the case by the staff, as students failed to relate their work to current world events. This was borne out in the student responses. With very few exceptions the students interviewed were not aware of current affairs, they did not read a newspaper regularly nor watch the news. If they did, however, they found it most interesting as they felt more able to understand what was going on in certain situations and discuss it at a later date in class. One school provided newspapers in its sixth form centre and teachers said they expected students to read them.

The majority of staff and students thought that GNVQ students would be better equipped for the 'real world' than A Level students since the course was seen to deal with *"relevant subjects"* and *"you are more used to dealing with people that you don't know"*. The ability of the students to function effectively in higher education was considered enhanced when compared to A Level students. Staff and students alike attributed this to the extensive research and investigation skills that they believed had to be developed and the self-study approach which involved taking the initiative and developing self-confidence. With regard to university progression the staff were of the belief that the students were well equipped for higher education, *"more so than A Levels"* as the GNVQ Advanced Business was seen as *"a good preparation in terms of personal skills for higher education and working life"*. *"Not for life but that's not its main purpose .... for work and university I think it does"*. Reasons for believing that the GNVQ programme prepared individuals for employment to a greater degree than A Levels included the fact that students have to work to strict deadlines and the style of working was thought to be more similar to employment than that of a purely academic course.

These responses indicate that the students consider themselves prepared for their future roles in the 'real world'. However, they were not seen by the staff concerned to be particularly aware of current affairs. If someone is to operate and function in society they should also be aware of how that society operates and the constraints it has to work within. If this is true then the case for including a general area of study, which covers social, cultural, political and economic issues, requires further consideration.

### **Hypothesis: An Education or a Qualification?**

The original remit the Government set for NCVQ was to *"prepare them (young people) for a range of related occupations but do not limit their options too early"* (Department of Education & Science, 1991). However, in allowing any degree of specialisation to take place, options are in fact necessarily limited. The interviews found that GNVQs appear to be favourably received by those studying the



GNVQ Advanced Business course. The students had made their career choices and were happy with the outcome: *"it (GNVQ Advanced Business) covers everything .....It's what we want"*. They do also appear to come away with more than the sum of the parts that make up the GNVQ: a broad-based programme, which also develops qualities such as responsibility, maturity, confidence, alongside research and investigation skills, time management skills and recognising the importance of taking the initiative. Is this sufficient? Areas that appeared to be lacking were political and economic awareness and to a lesser degree social and cultural awareness and creativity.

Business ethics and social etiquette do not feature in the course. These aspects were to be found in GNVQs of other disciplines such as Health and Social Care and Leisure and Tourism in the form of customer care. If the GNVQ Advanced Business was broadened to include these areas, making for a more general education with greater breadth and avoiding specialisation, students may well become more rounded individuals, potentially enhancing their personal awareness and personal currency. They may be better prepared for their role in the economy and in society. But at what cost? When an individual makes a choice about their career who is to say it is wrong? Is this a choice that can be made by policy makers and those implementing the courses, or should the students have the ultimate choice?

Both staff and students thought that the students had a satisfactory general business background and sufficient skills in terms of the Key Skills of IT, Application of Number and Communication upon completion of the two year GNVQ Advanced Business course. They were also thought to have developed skills of research and investigation and time management. By the end of the two years they were thought to be mature, responsible and confident individuals who recognised their future potential and had the wherewithal to get there. They were considered to be fairly inventive when it came to carrying out their work, in terms of taking the initiative and perhaps being creative about how they deal with situations. Can we ask for any more than this? It sounds as though the GNVQ experience is a positive experience as it stands. But should we be looking to develop rounded individuals who are prepared for every possible outcome, even that of not getting the job that they wanted, or not getting that university place? Should we prepare them not just for their immediate future role, but for life? In doing so students would become recipients of a worthwhile education where the *"learning experience should be the aim not a qualification."*

### **The Academic Vocational Divide**

In 1992 one of the initial reasons for the introduction of GNVQs was that they were supposed to bridge the gap between the academic nature of A Levels and the vocational, competence-based approach of NVQs. One could logically expect, therefore, GNVQs to contain elements of the academic as well as elements of the vocational. Offering a broad-based education, one would also expect less specialisation than found in NVQs, and in some A Levels. In achieving this

England and Wales would have three pathways for 16 - 19 education where, in theory at least, students could pick and mix from any of the pathways. For example: taking the GNVQ Business course alongside an AS Level in Spanish and an NVQ in Information Processing, allowing for greater flexibility in the provision of education for 16 - 19 year olds and would go part way to achieving some correlation with European systems such as the Baccalaureate. This would happen providing each of the pathways was equally valued, if parity of esteem was achieved between the vocational courses and the academic nature of A Levels; if GNVQs were actually seen as being able to bridge the so-called academic/vocational divide. To date this does not appear to have happened. For example, as one curriculum implementer said, it is A Levels that are seen to be equated to liberal education and it is A Levels that are held up by the British Government as the 'gold standard', the benchmark of British educational achievement. Such praise may be well deserved, but at what cost?

### **Parity of Esteem: A Levels & GNVQs**

In the Curriculum Criticism (chapter four) the academic nature of A Levels was seen to be equated with the scholastic achievement, and ideally the cultivation of the intellect through the pursuit of knowledge, of a liberal education. Interview respondents from the realms of both education and industry also suggested that A Levels were, rightly or wrongly, equated to liberal education. It may be that this connection to liberal education (as well as the history that there is to A Level provision) and the class based nature of that provision has meant that they have become the education to aspire to, but to the detriment of broad vocational programmes such as GNVQs. A serious question is raised by such an equation: A Levels and GNVQs, when considering the content of each of the programmes (see Chapter Four - Curriculum Criticism and Issler & Fourali 1995), share much common ground; this is also a point highlighted by FEDA (1996) in a content comparison of selected A Levels and Advanced GNVQs, Business being one of the areas involved in the study. Why, then, are A Levels considered more liberal than GNVQs? This question becomes increasingly poignant when one takes into account the learning styles of each mode of study and the breadth of education that each achieves. For example, A Levels can be seen as didactic in their approach whilst GNVQs strive for student centredness. The degree of narrowness and specialisation that takes place in each of the programmes, A Level study focuses on an average of three areas of study, whilst GNVQs try to offer a broad, general programme of study which includes the Key Skills of IT, Communication, and Application of Number as mandatory, and those of Working With Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving as optional. Such considerations suggest that the GNVQ experience for the student would in fact be more liberal than that of A Levels; greater autonomy is expected of the student studying on a GNVQ programme due in part to the necessary research and investigation that they have to undertake to complete their work, promoting and developing maturity and independence; qualities associated with liberal education.

For the true value of GNVQs to be recognised a period of stability is required and

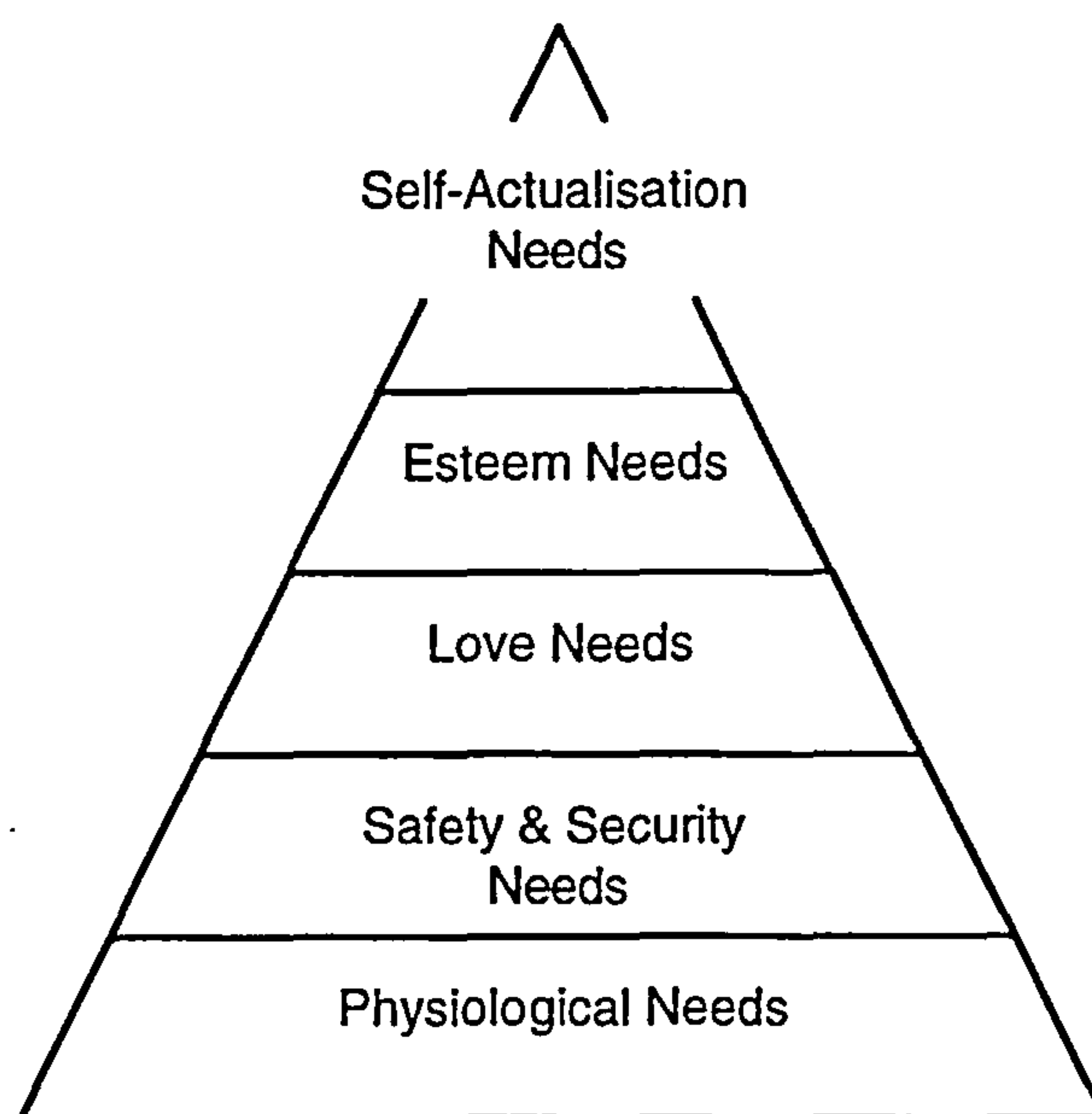


students have to filter through the system. Once this has occurred, and the educational 'product' can be measured, then parity may be attained. Only time will tell. However, what is of greater interest at the current moment is the reason why A Levels, which themselves have come under some criticism, are still seen as the benchmark, the 'gold standard' to the detriment of other, younger and perhaps more in tune with current social and economic requirements, programmes of study. Is it due to the perceived association with liberal education, bound up with the inherently class-based nature of liberal education and latterly A Levels?

### **The Dominance of Liberal Over Vocational Education**

One possible explanation relates to individuals' personal needs and desires. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one approach which can be related to personal goals and fulfilment in educational provision.

*Fig. 23 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



**Physiological needs** are the basic requirements of existence; those of food, shelter and clothing in meeting the needs of the body and for physical survival. This basic level of need could be seen to be met at work by the exchange of labour for a salary and by the physical conditions of the working environment.

**Safety and Security needs** involve protection from danger in the attempt to provide a predictability and order to life. Security of employment, pension and sick-pay schemes could be seen to go part way to providing for these needs.

As illustrated, the basic instinctive needs of the lower levels of the pyramid could be seen to equate to vocational education, in that they furnish the individual with the capacity to function in the workplace thereby meeting these needs.

**Love needs** relate directly to the emotions of the individual; their feeling of 'belonging'. In relation to education this could be met by team/group work carried out during a course of study, or even in the workplace, and by socialising with

fellow students/workers.

**Esteem needs** relate to an individual's desire for self-respect and the respect of others. This will relate to what values society currently sees as valuable - personal, self-development issues or qualifications and employment.

**Self-actualisation needs** are concerned with personal development and individual creativity to achieve one's full potential. In basic terms it is these needs that would relate directly to any form of liberal education that are seen as higher order needs.

Maslow claimed that the lower levels needs are satisfied before moving on to a higher need. If this is the case then it would be vocational education that would be a fundamental requirement and liberal education that would be aspired to, maintaining and perpetuating the dominance of liberal over vocational education. This may well have been the case when the Protestant work ethic flourished in an economy that could guarantee a job for life. Instead individuals can expect to experience periods of unemployment, a series of jobs in a variety of industries. In such a situation it would be the self-actualisation needs that may help the individual to deal with, and make sense of, all that is happening in their environment. In such a situation it would be liberal education that would fulfil these needs.

Alternatively, and in support of the above argument, one could look directly to what values society currently holds dear. Arguably there have been immense changes in society; people may be experiencing uncertainty about their role in life caused, perhaps, by recession, natural cultural changes that have occurred, the Conservative Governments call for 'family values' and moral education all inferring a fragmentation of values. To cope with such changes society could place importance on developing and possessing certain qualities and abilities such as free thinking, independence, maturity, self-development and self-fulfilment. If so, it is these qualities and abilities that will provide the kind of knowledge, understanding and analytical ability that would allow the individual to deal with such changes and make sense of them; it is these qualities and abilities that will be highly rated and bring with them higher status. In such an instance it would be liberal education that was deemed appropriate and able to fulfil society's needs.

Yet it is vocational education that has spearheaded educational changes where work related skills and knowledge have been deemed important for future progression. In such a situation it is being able to relate things to your working life that is the focus of attention. In the worst scenario greater importance is placed on having qualifications, irrespective of what they concern. In such an instance the qualification becomes the aim and there comes a tendency to forget what it is that the qualification is made of. This comes at the expense of the knowledge about the rest of a person's existence, personal and societal interactions; it all becomes forgotten, submerged in the contemporary philosophy of education.



### **The Introduction of GNVQs**

Change in the education arena is nothing new. With each change comes different demands and requirements. GNVQs represent one of the most recent innovations in the realm of education in England and Wales, initially in post-16 education and latterly introduced for 14 - 19 year olds. They have been charged with the task of bridging the academic/vocational divide, a gap which A Levels and NVQs maintain. To achieve such an aim, GNVQs were designed to offer the chance of vocational specialisation, if in a broad focus area, whilst also offering academic rigour in the form of underpinning knowledge and understanding; thereby bridging the chasm that is perceived to exist between a purely vocational course and a programme that is purely academic in nature.

However, their introduction has not been a smooth running operation. GNVQs were originally designed around the NVQ system where testing if an individual was able to 'do' a piece of work via external tests was not a high priority - unlike the heavy reliance placed on tests in an academic course. Consequently, tests did not feature greatly, if at all, in the initial outline of a GNVQ. However, the Government specified that there should be some form of externality. The tests became a 'bolt on' extra<sup>20</sup>. Over time they have been criticised and they were occasionally charged with the same criticisms made of NVQs namely by Smithers (1992). For the main part these criticisms revolved around the close relationship of NVQs to the demands of industry and economic need which had as its sole focus competence and the ability to do a given number of tasks in order to function effectively in a given occupational setting. The most notable connection of linking education with employment can be seen in the merger of the Department for Employment and the Department of Education thus becoming the single unit of the Department for Education & Employment. Such a focus epitomises contemporary philosophy of education; personal existence does not enter into the equation, all that is of concern is the ability to function in a working environment. NVQs, and possibly GNVQs as they built on the NVQ ethos, appeared to abandon most early educational philosophies in favour of the competence movement implemented in the USA. A question central to this study revolved around earlier philosophies and whether they also still have something of value to offer.

### **The Research Aims**

In order to answer, or shed light on, the issues outlined above and other interrelated issues a set of aims was drawn up as an attempt to address such concerns. The specific aims for this research programme were:-

- \* to locate GNVQs within a pattern of curriculum 'ideal-types' developed from an evaluation of the 16 - 19 curriculum and from educational theory more broadly,

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<sup>20</sup> This is set to change in 1998. The tests will change from the multiple-choice format to written format where appropriate, and there will be scope for the use of media such as case studies in GNVQ Business. There will be a move away from conventional recall examination, samples will be taken from the unit and require different kinds of application: they will become more applied. This change is hoped to bring with it increased rigour.

- conducting an investigative search into the aims, philosophical underpinnings and characteristics of each curriculum 'ideal-type'
- \* to examine the extent to which a liberal education is desirable for the current climate, in view of the increasing importance being placed on progressive vocational qualifications such as GNVQs
- \* using the field of Business Studies as an exemplar, to explore the nature of GNVQ course provision in school sixth forms and further education colleges, with regard to the fact that further education colleges have greater experience of vocational courses whereas school sixth forms are conducting GNVQs in a climate conditioned by A Levels
- \* to assess whether outcome-based systems, such as that offered by GNVQs, can provide a liberal education.

In an attempt to resolve these aims, the research programme had to fulfil a number of fundamental requirements.

Initially, core approaches to educational provision had to be established as ideal types; these ideal types were identified as being embodied in liberal education, vocational education and general education. To give such paradigms relevance in modern society necessitated that they be compared to significant educational provision, in this instance educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds. A curriculum criticism of A Levels, BTEC Diplomas, RSA, NVQs and GNVQs was conducted, taking into account their historical development, the philosophy behind each mode of provision, the aims, the content, the teaching and learning methods and intended outcomes of each approach. To achieve parity of comparison the field of Business Studies was used as an exemplar so that the results could be made generalisable. The culmination of this stage of the research required that the findings of the curriculum criticism be mapped against the established ideal types. The rationale for this was to identify traits within educational provision for 16 - 19 year olds that could be said to equate to liberal, general and/or vocational education.

To support and add greater depth to the findings generated (a summary of which can be found in 7.4 Curriculum Profiles) a series of interviews and an attitudinal survey were deemed appropriate. The reasoning for this field work was to ascertain whether staff and students concerned with GNVQ Business held the same belief as that generated in the desk research and whether similarities and/or differences existed dependent upon the type of institution, e.g: that of school sixth forms and further education colleges.

The final stage of the research programme was concerned with the future direction of GNVQs in the light of the initial findings. This brought to the fore contemporary approaches to education and compared them to earlier philosophies, namely those of vocational education, including competence- and outcome-based education and liberal education. Again, a series of interviews was conducted. This time with individuals responsible for post - 16 educational development and industry representatives from



the realm of training and development. To substantiate the findings of this series of interviews staff and students were again consulted by way of verification of the conclusions drawn. The focal point overall was to identify whether GNVQs were seen as a suitable vehicle for 16 -19 year olds in education, and to analyse the concept of liberal education in a modern context which would take into account the introduction of GNVQs.

### **Alternative Philosophies of Education**

For the purpose of this study three philosophies of education are identified: those epitomised by liberal, general and vocational education. Classically, the dichotomy which exists in education is between the liberal and the vocational. Such a division has its roots in the Greek tradition of Plato and Aristotle and latterly in the tradition established by aristocracy where the favoured elite were encouraged to embark on the Great Tour of Europe. Subservient to this was the role of the artisan whose concern was with daily functions, as opposed to the art of high conversation, the good life and aesthetics. In addition, there is general education; education that is sometimes equated to liberal education, although Dewey's work shows it to be distinct.

A complex picture emerges when one tries to view the three ideals together. Questions arise such as: what actually is a liberal education, or a general education, or a vocational education and what do they mean? The Ideal Type Analysis of chapter three is an attempt to give a comprehensive outline of their individual natures, a summary of which is given below.

Liberal education has developed a dual vision; there is the humanistic objective and the knowledge objective. The humanistic objective is concerned with the knowledge that is necessary for life and living with others where societal aspects are of high regard. On the other hand, the knowledge objective holds knowledge as an end in itself, knowledge is content. The cultivation of the intellect is the desired goal. Both of these objectives are historical ideals. In reality, and in a more modern context, they no longer hold the same values. Both have become a distortion of the original ideal through modernisation. The humanistic objective has come to be represented in the present day by etiquette and good manners which, if well developed, can be used to one's advantage in social gratification and social climbing. The knowledge objective can also be seen as a distortion of the original ideal for use in modern society. It has become a form of scholastic and academic achievement where the qualification allows an individual to progress onward and upward. This is often represented by the A Level system, (which can be a narrow programme of study: not something that was advocated in the original ideal), which is used as a platform for university entrance and the future gains that it is seen to embody. Both of the more modern interpretations of liberal education are the antipathy of the original ideals.

Vocational education has historically been seen to be in direct opposition to the ideals of liberal education: vocational education could not possibly offer a liberal education. Rather than considering self-development and individual fulfilment as with liberal education, vocational education is led by the demands of the economy. It aims to

transmit society's norms and values intrinsic to the world of work. It is an educational approach which aims to empower the individual to learn specific skills necessary for their role in society and their occupations. Specialisation occurs in varying degrees; it is closely linked to industry and commerce. Knowledge, understanding and skills are those which are important for the world of work. Knowledge is an instrument for attaining economic and social goals and is necessary for economic well-being. In its most progressive form it aims to foster attitudes and dispositions such as entrepreneurship and enterprise. Yet in its most narrowest conception it can mean imparting competence in very specific tasks.

General education appears to bridge liberal and vocational education. It holds valuable aspects of both liberal and vocational education. Like liberal education it aims to offer breadth in education, knowledge and understanding. The knowledge is hypothetical but regarded as a means to an end. It is an instrument used for the development of character and the enrichment of life experience. Like vocational education the empowerment of the individual is important. There is a focus on the world of work as well as the enrichment of life. This can be seen to be of increasing importance in a world which holds work as a focal point of one's existence.

### **Curriculum Profiles**

Having established the three ideal types of liberal, general and vocational education the next stage of the research was to develop a set of curriculum profiles; these profiles were taken from past and present post-16 educational provision concerned with the field of Business Studies. A profile was created for each of the following: the GCE A Level Business Studies, the BTEC Business & Finance diploma, RSA Background to Business, NVQ Business Administration and GNVQ Business. The main focus of attention was at GNVQ Advanced Level or equivalent for reasons of parity and generalisability.

### **GCE A Level Business Studies**

The A Level Business Studies holds as central to its being the overall philosophy of GCE A Level programmes; that it should be a disciplined and rigorous programme of study which can be used as a platform for further study, for example at degree or equivalent level. A Levels aim to develop critical thinking abilities such as analysis, evaluation and synthesis, in those who follow the programme. The A Level in Business Studies would expect these skills to be in a business setting, taking into consideration local, national and international levels of operation.

Assessment methods focus greatly on the terminal examination which aims to test knowledge, comprehension and application as well as analysis, evaluation and synthesis of material. The passing of a terminal examination requires that a student must follow established patterns, thoughts and truths. Sustained reading, memorising and revision of theoretical material is commonplace to achieve this. This is supported by formal lectures and essay writing which necessitate hard work and discipline - where drill becomes a necessity when assessment focuses on a terminal examination. Didactic teaching methods are often in use where the direction and pace is that dictated by the



tutor leaving little room for individual creativity or imagination to be developed.

The focus on the acquisition of knowledge, reason and logic can be seen as a form of liberal education. The academic nature of A Levels often means that they are equated to liberal education. However, the narrow field of inquiry, of two-to-four subject areas, and the didactic teaching methods can be seen as being in direct opposition to the original ideal of the knowledge objective in liberal education. It has more in common with scholastic achievement as opposed to knowledge for its own sake. In addition, such a formal approach to learning may be seen as a very illiberal rather than a liberal approach to education.

### **BTEC Business & Finance**

By their very description, BTEC programmes are, or in some cases were, vocational in nature. Their philosophy was concerned with giving individuals the opportunity to specialise and develop skills that are important to industry and personal effectiveness; this was not to be at the exclusion of underpinning knowledge and understanding. General education traits can also be identified in a BTEC programme. There was a required understanding of the world of work, not only the ability to carry out one's chosen profession effectively, but also to develop communication and negotiation skills that would help in the work place and in social situations - an element of both vocational and general education. The consideration given to personal development manifested itself in the form of a set of Common Skills which were seen as the transferable element of a BTEC programme.

Assessment methods included projects, assignments and examinations allowing theoretical as well as practical approaches to study. These were supported by the teaching and learning methods utilised. Role play, case studies, group work and exercises, related to business at all levels of operation and integration of subject matter suggest a student centred approach that would facilitate the assessment procedures.

The combination of vocational and general education tendencies suggests a progressive form of vocational education.

### **RSA Background to Business**

Although now no longer in existence, the RSA Background to Business programme had as a concern the attainment of both individual and national economic goals. In attaining such goals, through practical education and training, a skilled and knowledgeable workforce was the desired outcome. This was achieved through the unity of competence in its broadest sense which also holds underpinning knowledge and understanding as important.

Training in specific areas, along with underpinning knowledge and understanding, were pivotal. Areas deemed important and worthy of study were those which would help the individual in practical reality, in the world of work. In equipping individuals with such skills and knowledge the RSA Background to Business course could be said to be meeting the needs and demands of the economy. A focus such as this was inextricably linked to the vocational training objective of the vocational ideal type. For example, the RSA

Background to Business focused on administrative support and external factors which affect the world of business, a major concern of which was the rapid pace of technological change. It did also, however, have an element that could be perceived as a concern of the vocational education objective due to the importance placed on underpinning knowledge and understanding.

The focus on the world of work and the priority given to work-based experience was evidently connected to the vocational ideal type; such concerns also feature in general education. The unity of competence, however, did equate the programme more with the vocational than the general ideal type.

### **NVQ Business Administration**

The economic focus of NVQs, whereby those competences that are deemed important are those which industry has specified for economic survival and well being, points toward the vocational education ideal type. The NVQ in Business Administration focuses on the unity of competence whereby the aim is to promote the ability to perform specified activities in a business setting, in line with the vocational ideal type.

The role of experience in the work place is central to such courses as the NVQ Business Administration. This at first glance suggests connections with the general ideal type. However, the role of underpinning knowledge and understanding appears to play a significantly less important role than in the RSA programme - to the detriment of its general education connections. Occupational competence demonstrated in the work place or in a realistic simulation is the sole aim. In such an instance NVQs attract the criticism of being too narrow in their conception (Hyland 1993, 1994a&b, Smithers 1993). The unity of competence can allow for underpinning knowledge and understanding but does not appear to do so in this instance. NVQs, when we consider the lower levels of attainment (Levels I, II, and III which have been the focus in this study), can, therefore, be said to be vocational training in one of its most narrow forms, or traditional vocationalism (Hodkinson 1991a).

### **GNVQ Business**

GNVQ programmes have much in common with its predecessor, BTEC programmes and in this instance the BTEC Business & Finance. They are vocational in their conception in that they are a form of preparation for work in a broad career area. This initially points towards the vocational ideal type. However, there is also the inclusion of a series of Key Skills, which have been seen as the transferable element of the programme - skills which the student can adapt to changing situations. The inclusion of such elements, with the view to helping the development of character and life experience, has strong connections to the general education ideal type.

The focus given to the world of work, the consideration of underpinning knowledge and understanding surrounding that environment, and the inclusion of Key Skills has strong leanings towards both the progressive vocational and the general educational ideal types. The aims of GNVQs (to prepare individuals for employment or higher education) and the suggested teaching and learning methods are to provide a student centred mode of learning. In addition students are supposed to develop time management skills,



planning and organisational skills through the required action planning of their work. Such aims and methods reinforce the connections that GNVQ Business has with both vocational and general education.

However, to a lesser degree, some aspects of the GNVQ Business have connections with liberal education. Firstly, the continued focus on the development of communication skills can be seen to relate to the socialisation aspects of liberal education evident initially in the humanistic objective and latterly as forms of etiquette where codes of conduct and behaviour have become the focal point. Secondly, the option of including the development of problem solving abilities can be related to the critical analysis criteria of the knowledge objective. Thirdly, and this could be true of each of the programmes in question, the ability of individuals to make their own choices about what to study could be seen to relate to freedom of choice, which has something in common with the freedom aspects of liberal education.

As can be seen, the GNVQ Business is a complex programme. It has strong vocational and general education tendencies; but what should not be ruled out is the potential also to achieve some kind of liberal education. This potential is more concerned with the way in which GNVQ programmes are delivered than with their content. The student centred approach advocated in GNVQ aims to develop independence, self reliance, self confidence, initiative and resourcefulness. It is the way that students tackle their work for example, planning their schedule or setting goals to be met for the completion of their work; finding and using alternative sources of information such as relevant literature and/or approaching businesses or individuals for information; and in the evaluation of their work, that go part way to achieving this.

### **The Field Research**

Having typified the theoretical background to liberal, general, and vocational education and characterised a number of past and present post-16 educational programmes, and correlated these two sub-sets of information, this information was then to be compared to what was thought to be happening in the educational establishments that were dealing with GNVQ programmes.

The field of Business Studies was used as an exemplar to explore the nature of GNVQ course provision in school sixth forms and further education colleges. The two types of institutions were involved in the study due to the fact that further education colleges have greater experience of vocational courses whereas school sixth forms were conducting GNVQs in a climate primarily conditioned by A Levels.

### **The Initial Exploratory Interviews**

GNVQs in general were felt to be valuable qualifications by those involved with this initial stage of the research. The breadth offered in a GNVQ was considered wide ranging in its vocational context. Greater breadth was considered a possibility if increased class time was made available on the programme of study; this increased breadth was considered beneficial for preparing individuals for the multitude of situations that they will subsequently encounter.

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQs was favourably received. Students expressed the desire to see greater delivery of material from the lecturer at the introductory stages of a unit. A combination of initial formal input followed by individual and group work would help to develop the students' independence and act as a form of preparation for all kinds of future progression.

It was the opinion of those staff and students interviewed at this exploratory stage that the way in which GNVQs compare to other modes of study in terms of parity, equivalence and standard at the time of the investigation needed to be more clearly defined. The value of GNVQs also needed to be recognised, as did the fact that GNVQ programmes are not in direct competition with A Levels; GNVQs are an alternative mode of study which cater for a group of students who wish to follow a more defined career path which was said to be *"more relevant to life and equal to, if not better than A Levels"*.

A number of problems were identified at this stage of the research by the interviewees. These problems were mainly due to the pace at which GNVQs were introduced. Key Skills, their delivery, assessment and grading were seen as problem areas. All areas have undergone change since the time of the investigation and more changes are planned for September 1998; externally set assignments will be introduced in all of the Key Skills areas and in one of the Mandatory units per GNVQ Level, Application of Number will also be tested and changes to the current multiple choice tests are planned and will be in the form of short answer questions. The rationale for such changes is to increase the rigour of GNVQ programmes and to achieve the desired parity of esteem with other post-16 programmes such as A Levels. In doing so it is hoped that GNVQs will fulfil their potential and provide a valuable enrichment of the 16 - 19 provision.

The information, generated out of the initial exploratory interviews, was then, along with material formed out of the ideal type analysis and the curriculum criticism, used as the basis for further verification in the form of an attitudinal survey/questionnaire.

### **The Attitudinal Survey**

The over arching themes to come out of the attitudinal survey follow, for the main part, the hypothesis generated out of the initial exploratory interviews, adding validity to the findings.

GNVQs were favourably received by those implementing the programme; they were seen as comparable to alternative systems such as A Levels and GCSEs that should not be seen as the easier option, since they were considered demanding programmes of study in their own right - not necessarily the correct choice for lower ability students or those not suited to A Levels. Parity of esteem between GNVQs, A Levels and GCSEs, in terms of level of demand and the challenge offered by each programme of study, was seen to be achieved.

The inclusion of Key Skills elements into the GNVQ programme was seen as a positive approach which has since been advocated in academic programmes such as A Levels



(Dearing 1996). They were seen as the transferable elements of a GNVQ programme that provided breadth to a vocationally specific area - breadth that was considered sufficient and did not warrant the inclusion of any further Mandatory Key Skills. The current Key Skills were seen as being able to assist individual students in coping with the academic side of a GNVQ, with the development of study skills; both of which were seen as necessary for progression to university or to the world of work.

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQ implementation was seen to be a distinct advantage of the system; it was seen to help in the development of confidence, independence and individual responsibility, and to help maintain student interest and motivation.

Competence-based (as with NVQs) and performance-based (as with GNVQs) programmes have been the subject of much debate and have come under attack since their inceptions in 1986 and 1992 respectively, most notably by Smithers (1993), Hyland (1993, 1994a&b) and Wolf (1990). The central theme of this criticism has focused on the possible detraction from underpinning knowledge and understanding when implementing a competence-based system. The findings of the attitudinal survey found that competence was believed to mean more than skill attainment, it was equated with skills and knowledge. The common opinion was that to 'do' something required some degree of understanding; it was not thought possible to carry out a task if students were unaware of its implications. Students on GNVQ programmes were required to apply their knowledge and understanding to their specialist vocational areas; this was seen as a distinct advantage when compared to A Levels.

The range of subjects in a GNVQ was thought to promote a broad, general education; the students were considered competent in a wide variety of situations. However, concern was expressed about covering the Performance Criteria (which in themselves were seen as prescriptive, mechanical and detrimental to depth attainment) in a superficial way; the students would have knowledge of a variety of topics and subjects, but misgivings were expressed about the possibility of students knowing very little about each of these topics and subjects; competence was seen to detract from depth of knowledge. This was seen to be a possibility if students were solely directed to achieving the Performance Criteria and little else. Potentially breadth, generated out the vast number of Performance Criteria, was seen to be at the expense of depth. In addition, and in line with the criticism expressed about competence attainment, a further area of concern involved the issue of externally set and marked end of unit tests. These were viewed with some suspicion by those implementing the GNVQ programmes. The main concern was that the testing of 'facts' was considered to be in direct opposition to the developmental, performance-based outcomes of a GNVQ programme.

Consensus over what constitutes a liberal education and, to a lesser degree, general education is hard to come by; this study was no exception. A general education was equated to the coverage of a wide range of material through which the student was encouraged to question facts and develop an inquiring mind. A liberal education was concerned with those processes that broadened the mind and freed the person from

narrow thought. In both instances some concern was expressed about defining such broad concepts by a limited number of statements, in that both of the educational paradigms were seen to be far-reaching and encompassing many varied aspects that were not quantified but were subject to further investigation via a final series of interviews with education policy makers and industrialists as well as staff and students concerned with GNVQ Business programmes.

Having generated a broad consensus of what may be considered liberal and general education, the next issue was whether GNVQs had the qualities perceived of these educational ideals. GNVQs were seen as being able to offer a general education due to the wide range of subjects studied on a GNVQ programme; the vocational nature of a GNVQ was not thought to detract from this. They were also thought to be able to provide greater breadth than the A Level alternative, in this instance the A Level in Business & Finance.

With regard to GNVQ's ability to offer a liberal education, the findings from the attitudinal survey indicated that this was a distinct possibility, providing best practice was implemented and individual students were encouraged to question facts. However, to ensure that a liberal education was achieved through GNVQs the students should also be encouraged to think for themselves, a process that was not thought to be evident at the time of the investigation. Furthermore, GNVQs were not seen to broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought - a prerequisite of liberal education.

The core belief of the respondents was that a liberal education was an individual's right, throughout the whole of their studies, and that it was necessary to prepare post-16 students for many facets of their future life. There was some accord that a general education would be sufficient but the argument in favour of a liberal education was more substantial.

### **Comparison With the Curriculum Profile**

GNVQs were introduced as part of the attempt to provide standardisation of the vocational education system but also in an attempt to bridge the so-called 'academic divide' between academic programmes such as A Levels and competence programmes such as NVQs. GNVQs were seen as the middle ground, encompassing theoretical elements that were concerned with a broad vocational area, limiting specialisation. Underpinning knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics was one aim; transferable skills in the form of Key Skills were also a main feature, the inclusion of which was to promote greater breadth in vocational education allowing a student to progress into a variety of future career paths or higher education courses.

The research findings indicate that GNVQs, on the whole, were seen as a valid and valued addition to post-16 educational provision and have the ability to redress the academic divide, since they were seen as equally demanding programmes of study when compared to A Levels. They were seen as an excellent preparation for work and an acceptable preparation for HE; A Levels were thought of as the better route when pursuing HE. Such attitudes may change when GNVQ students have actually completed HE courses and there is sufficient data in support of such progression; the



FEFC (1995) however already suggest that GNVQ applicants for HE courses are positively received and that the standard achieved by such applicants is comparable to students who have followed the traditional HE route of A level study.

The competence issue is most significant in relation to NVQ programmes where enormous impetus is behaviourism and functional analysis, but is sometimes related to GNVQs (Smithers 1993) due in part to their performance-based nature and the required achievement of the Performance Criteria. The Performance Criteria, as part of a GNVQ, are supposed to be an indication of what each GNVQ student is able to do and are there to ensure that the full range of a given topic is covered. In line with one of the objectives behind GNVQs and the inclusion of Performance Criteria the field research findings suggest that GNVQ students were competent in a wide variety of subjects and had acquired skill, knowledge and understanding surrounding a given topic. The wide range was seen to be promoted by the Performance Criteria whereas the knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by the student in their application of the abstract to their chosen vocational field. However, some concern was expressed by the respondents in this area: the Performance Criteria were considered prescriptive, mechanical and detrimental to the attainment of depth of knowledge and understanding - points which have much in common with the criticism levied at NVQs and competence-based programmes. The concern was that, although students studying for a GNVQ, in this instance that of Business, cover a wide variety of subjects and topics, the question was raised whether such skills, knowledge and understanding was in fact superficial.

Breadth, identified as a central point to GNVQs by the attitudinal survey respondents, was seen to be achieved due in part to the number of subjects studied and the number of Performance Criteria for each of those subjects. The inclusion of Key Skills, considered a vital element of GNVQ provision by NCVQ, and constantly under review, were designed as nationally determined personal transferable skills. In line with the rationale for including Key Skills in post-16 education provision those involved with this study agreed that they were a vital part of the GNVQ; they were seen as the transferable element of a GNVQ which provided breadth to the vocational programme. This was supported by the fact that the attitudinal survey respondents thought that Key Skills assisted students with the development of study skills, the academic or theoretical side of the GNVQ programme and in whatever future progression they undertook.

The student centred nature of GNVQs was favourably received by those implementing such courses, and those studying them. Students were asked to undertake a variety of approaches to their work and was seen to develop student confidence, independence and individual responsibility; they were also factors that were considered central elements of providing breadth in education. The student centred approach, as advocated in GNVQ implementation, is said to include a variety of activities. BTEC (1993c p.42) identifies a number of activities including case studies, role play, work placements, individual and group work, projects, assignments and report writing, as well as such activities as planning and organising events and designing products and services. The research findings indicate that such approaches and methods are undertaken by the students to a greater degree of satisfaction than perhaps a straight

lecture programme would receive.

### **In Relation to the Ideal Types**

GNVQs are clearly vocational in their conception whereby their initial focus is that of preparation for a broad career area. In line with the vocational ideal type, which typifies the vocational as being of utilitarian pragmatic assumptions, knowledge attainment in a GNVQ is concerned with that which can be used as an instrument for individual (and perhaps subsequently national) progression and life enhancement.

The inclusion of a series of Key Skills is seen to add breadth to the vocational area of study by those designing the courses, those implementing them and the students who follow such programmes, suggesting some element of general education to a GNVQ. Further testament to general education elements in a GNVQ is the status given to personal experience and development, with instrumental, subjectivist overtones, as outlined in the general education ideal type.

The approach to GNVQ implementation adds further confirmation to the connection of GNVQs to vocational education and general education. The focus on the application of knowledge and understanding to the 'real world' and the world of work, and the inclusion of Key Skills make this apparent. The teaching and learning methods, combined with the assessment techniques which monitor planning, information seeking and handling, evaluation aspects as well as the quality of the work, give further corroboration to general and vocational aspects.

In line with the information generated out of the ideal type analysis, briefly sketched above, the survey findings show that a general education was equated to breadth of knowledge and the ability to question facts and develop an inquiring mind. It was these qualities that confirmed GNVQs, by the interview and questionnaire respondents, as general in their educational approach; the vocational bias not seen as detracting from this. The required application of abstract knowledge to the chosen vocational area, along with the various methods students were required to undertake in the completion of their work, the wide range of subjects studied and the number of Performance Criteria, were all seen to contribute positively to the general education orientation of GNVQs.

Confusion was apparent with regard to the common perception of liberal education. Little, or no, consensus existed among the field research cohort at this stage of the investigation. This may have been the fault of the statements included on the attitudinal survey, as a large percentage of the respondents expressed concern over limiting such a broad concept (however defined) to two or three all encompassing statements; greater scope was asked for. However, elements of liberal education were seen to include, amongst other things but not specified, a broadening of the mind so as to free the individual from narrow thought. In relation to GNVQs liberal education was not seen to be attained; they were not thought to broaden the mind and free the individual from narrow thought; students were not thought to be encouraged to think for themselves in any great way.

In a more positive light the common perception was that, in the best practice, over the



period of the GNVQ programme, and possibly more towards the end of the programme of study, the students were encouraged to question facts rather than just accept them and a liberal education (to some degree) was thought to be a possibility, if not a reality at the time of the investigation. This information corresponds to that generated out of the ideal type analysis combined with the GNVQ curriculum profile which indicated that certain aspects of a GNVQ were potentially liberal in the approach to education. The inclusion of personal transferable skills, the student centred approach, the focus on problem solving abilities and the open ended nature to a GNVQ programme, were seen to offer great potential for liberal education overtones.

GNVQs overall, and GNVQ Business in particular, can be seen to have strong vocational and general education tendencies; it may also have the potential to fulfil certain liberal education criteria even though such potential may not yet have been met. The concern here is that it was liberal education that was seen by the majority of field work respondent, to be every individual's right throughout their education; it was liberal education that was considered necessary in preparing post-16 individuals for their life in general (of which work must play a large role). A general education was viewed favourably but to a lesser degree when compared to liberal education. Problems that this raises surround the belief that GNVQs offer a valid and valuable form of vocational and general education but it was liberal education (however defined) that was seen as the ideal way forward in post-16 educational provision.

### **GNVQs and a Liberal Education**

The original remit the Government set for NCVQ was: *"prepare them (young people) for a range of related occupations but do not limit their options too early"* (Department of Education & Science, 1991). However, in allowing any degree of specialisation to take place, options are in fact necessarily limited. The question of whether this or any other aspect of a GNVQ automatically excludes a liberal education was the focus for the final round of interviews. These interviews were initially conducted with individuals from the realms of educational policy making and industrialists with training and development as their main concern, followed by interviews with GNVQ Business staff and students by way of confirming the findings. These findings can be found in Chapter 6 - GNVQs in the Light of Liberal Education, a summary of which follows.

The findings of the interviews with those from the realm of educational policy making and industrialists indicated that a liberal education was seen to be concerned with self-development and self-growth; this was related to the development of sets of values and beliefs, a moral conscience and social, political and cultural awareness. These factors were identified as enabling the individual to become more fully aware of what is happening in their immediate environment and in a broader context thereby facilitating their individual development.

Equally, another common denominator of liberal education was identified as 'knowledge'. Liberal education was associated with cultivation of the intellect through the development of an inquiring mind, where independent thought and reflection would allow the individual to make informed decisions and choices, separating knowledge from subjective opinion; factors bound up with the knowledge objective. Such mind training,

when combined with the self-development aspects, was perceived as being able to allow the individual to make sense of the world in which they function: *"liberal education as well as looking at the knowledge, is trying to make use of that knowledge to make a better person ..."* , said one individual concerned with curriculum implementation.

These dual functions, identified as being concerns of a liberal education, are described in the ideal type of liberal education set out in the Ideal Type Analysis of chapter three; liberal education was associated with the humanistic objective where the art of right conduct and the 'good life' were pivotal, and to the knowledge objective where the development and the cultivation of the intellect through an inquiring mind was paramount.

When trying to relate these perceptions of liberal education to GNVQs the common belief was that GNVQs were not originally designed as vehicles for liberal education, nor should they have been. This was felt to be best fulfilled by A Levels. However, this was not seen to mean that they could not offer some form of liberal education within the broad-based vocational programme. A problem that was recognised at this stage of the investigation revolved around one of the original aims behind the introduction of GNVQs: that of bridging the academic vocational divide. To do this they must contain both a vocational and academic element; the concern being that a stronger focus given to either of these elements would mean that they would no longer be fulfilling their objectives. Nevertheless, the overarching belief among educational policy makers and industrialists was that individuals would in fact benefit from a more liberal if not general approach.

For GNVQs to attain something akin to a general education, or even a liberal education, a flexible programme of study was thought to be the way forward where the opportunity to balance the vocational with the general or liberal should be given. To achieve this there was a call for more units which were common to more than one GNVQ, allowing individuals to experience greater breadth in their studies. Such a broad-based nature to GNVQs was seen as a positive step forward in the provision of vocational courses, greater breadth would also be welcomed in terms of greater focus on personal development classes. In an attempt to add liberal overtones to a GNVQ personal development alone was not seen to be sufficient; 'values' were thought to warrant some attention.

Taking the focus away from the vocational had two opposing responses. The first of which, being positive, was that providers of 16 - 19 education would be able to focus on the *"learning experience"* rather than just the qualification. This in itself was seen to go some way to promoting liberal approaches to education, in that it would concentrate on developmental processes and methods of learning. Such an approach would also counteract the criticism that, currently, *"GNVQs are too reliant on concepts such as mastering learning"* .

Conversely, if GNVQs were broadened and the focus shifted from the vocational to the general or liberal, the concern was that a liberal and/or general focus to education for 16 - 19 year olds was not necessarily the 'best' way forward for students because taking the option to study a vocational programme away from individuals was seen as being in direct opposition to a liberal approach.



This information was then used to develop a set of research questions directed at GNVQ tutors and students at the Advanced Level of study. The rationale for these final interviews was to investigate the learning experience of those studying for a GNVQ, in an attempt to locate liberal education potential within a vocational programme of study.

The overriding opinion expressed in these final interviews with staff and students was that the students appeared to come away with more than the sum of the parts that make up the GNVQ: a broad-based programme which also develops qualities such as responsibility, maturity, confidence, alongside research and investigation skills, time management skills and recognising the importance of taking the initiative. Is this sufficient? Areas that appeared to be lacking were political and economic awareness and to a lesser degree social and cultural awareness and creativity. Also, business ethics and social etiquette did not feature in the course. These aspects were to be found in GNVQs of other disciplines such as Health and Social Care and Leisure and Tourism in the form of customer care.

Upon completion of the two year GNVQ Advanced Business course both staff and students thought that the students had a satisfactory general business background and sufficient skills in terms of the Key Skills of IT, Application of Number and Communication. They were also thought to have developed skills of research, investigation and time management. By the end of the two years they were thought to be mature, responsible and confident individuals who recognised their future potential and had the wherewithal to get there. They were considered to be fairly inventive when it came to carrying out their work, in terms of taking the initiative and perhaps being creative about how they deal with situations. Can such outcomes be solely vocational or even general education? Or do they have something in common with ideas of liberal education?

## **Conclusions**

Historically, one of the oldest and revered philosophies of education has been that which is liberal in its orientation. Its concern with self-development, in a variety of forms, and the perceived benefits that it can bring to an individual's daily existence have been central to maintaining this reverence. In more recent times academic programmes of study in the form of degree courses and A Levels have been equated to liberal education due to the importance that is placed on knowledge acquisition. When considering post-16 education it is A Levels that are seen to be equated to liberal education and it is A Levels that are held up by the British Government as the 'gold standard', the benchmark of British educational achievement. Under such conditions new approaches to education will always be playing 'catch-up' irrespective of the value they may hold.

Recent changes in the post-16 educational arena have been in the form of vocational education, where work related skills and knowledge have been deemed important for future progression. In such a situation it is being able to relate things to your working life that is the focus of attention. Yet if one could look directly to what values society currently holds dear, those values that society considers as valuable to have, who is to say that they are necessarily work related, particularly in a society that has no

guarantee of a job for life.

Arguably, there have been immense changes in society; people may be experiencing uncertainty about their role in life caused, perhaps, by recession, natural cultural changes that have occurred and the Conservative Government's call for 'family values' and moral education inferring a fragmentation of values. To cope with such changes society could place importance on developing and possessing certain qualities and abilities, such as free thinking, independence, maturity, self-development and self-fulfilment. If so, it is these qualities and abilities that will provide the kind of knowledge, understanding and analytical ability that would allow the individual to deal with such changes and make sense of them; it is these qualities and abilities that will be highly rated and bring with them higher status. In such an instance it would be liberal education that was deemed appropriate and able to fulfil society's needs.

Is it only a liberal education that can fulfil the needs of society? Does a vocational education, that is led in part by the demands of the economy, automatically rule out such outcomes as self-development and individual fulfilment? In all likelihood, in the worst possible scenario, yes it probably does, but it is not something that can be said of all vocational programmes. I would suggest that it is something that may also be possible in certain academic routes also, particularly if society comes to value qualifications *per se*, irrespective of what they concern (A Levels, NVQs or GNVQs). In such an instance, the qualification becomes the aim and there arises a tendency to forget what the qualification is made of. This comes at the expense of the knowledge about the rest of a person's existence, personal and societal interactions; it all becomes forgotten, submerged in the contemporary philosophy of education.

Working on the premise that liberal education does have some intrinsic value in a modern context, what is required is a consideration of all that is deemed 'good' in educational terms, with regard to historical and contemporary philosophies of education. If a programme of study is able to unite elements of both philosophies, by default or design, then it too will merit the same reverence that is given unconditionally to academic programmes of study such as A Levels.

One of the initial reasons for the introduction of GNVQs was that they were supposed to bridge the gap between the academic nature of A Levels and the vocational, competence-based approach of NVQs. One could logically expect, therefore, GNVQs to contain elements of the academic as well as elements of the vocational. Being broad-based, one would also expect less specialisation than found in NVQs and in some A Levels. Research undertaken for this project indicates that GNVQs, although vocational and arguably general in the inception, are in fact able to offer some form of liberal education.

The liberal element in a GNVQ can be seen to come from a variety of sources; the inclusion of Key Skills being identified as the transferable elements of a GNVQ programme, enabling the individual to interact effectively in a variety of situations and that of Communication in particular being seen as developmental and related to the societal aspects of a liberal education. The Key Skills that as yet are not defined as



Mandatory are also of great importance: Working With Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance, and Problem Solving if implemented could aid in the development of critical analysis skills, in the development of an inquiring mind through independent thinking and reflection, allowing individuals to make informed judgments.

The student centred approach advocated in GNVQs also offers some potential for a liberal education experience. The research and investigation skills, the action planning and time management skills that are a necessary part of a GNVQ mean that GNVQ students should be able to identify that information which is relevant to the study and to separate knowledge from opinion thereby developing their intellect in striving for excellence. The approaches to learning that a GNVQ student experiences are potentially liberal. The case studies, projects, role plays that involve group and individual work; the contacting of external bodies for information can all help to develop confidence, maturity and self-reliance. It is factors such as these that will enable individuals to make sense of the world in which they operate.

Qualities that were identified as evident in the nature of a liberal education also included aspects such as cultural inheritance that would come from moral conscience, political awareness and, to a certain degree, self awareness all of which are bound within a social critique which appreciates and respects the value systems of others. It is these factors that were identified as lacking in GNVQ students; the GNVQ system was not promoting or developing such aspects. The question arises whether any educational system can in fact promote or develop such aspects but in a time that has seen the call for 'family values' and moral education surely they should become part of the post- and pre-16 curriculum. Allowing time for personal development classes, and what has previously been seen as general studies classes, would go part way to redressing the balance. It would offer greater breadth in education which would in turn create fuller, more rounded individuals who could hold their own in any number of differing situations. Concentration would be placed on the education experience and not the qualification. Students would be the recipients of a worthwhile education that would facilitate future progression and allow them to become competitive in a European context and the post-16 educational system of England and Wales would not be found wanting when compared to the rest of Europe - a point that was a major concern in the late 1980s and was one of the reasons for introducing NVQs and subsequently GNVQs.

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## **1 - GCE A Level Examination Boards**

Oxford & Cambridge School Examination Board (OCSEB)

University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations (UODLE)\*

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)

University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC)

Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB)

Associated Examining Board (AEB)

Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)

\* The Nuffield GCE A Level is available, through UODLE

**Subject Content**

**Guidance Notes**

**Basic business organisations and their objectives**

**SECTION 1**

**The formation and aims of the different forms of business organisations.**

This section is included since a knowledge of the forms of business organisation is a necessary introduction to a Business Studies course. Candidates will be expected to have knowledge of: limited companies, multinational firms, sole traders and partnerships, public corporations and co-operative societies.

**The problems of initially setting up an organisation. Structural reorganisation including location and siting, and management structures to meet changing objectives and size.**

Candidates are not expected to know the detailed requirements of the Companies Acts but they should know the effect that they have on the firm.

Candidates will need to have some historical background covering developments in the post-1945 period - where they are relevant to the present position. These, however, will not be examined specifically.

**The need for and problems of effective communication within a business.**

**Communication.** Candidates should be aware of the importance to all sections of industry of effective communication and the problems that can arise if this is lacking, for example, in relationships between employer and employee, seller and customer and between business and government and the society, both national and international, in which it operates. Communication aspects should be covered in all sections of the syllabus.

**Communications between business and owners, customers and other interested parties.**

Candidates will not be expected to have detailed knowledge of the way in which the technology of communication (e.g. telex) operates but they should know the uses to which this technology can be put.

**The use, preparation and interpretation of business data.**

Candidates will be expected to understand the concepts and the application of the arithmetic mean, the mode, the median and trends and be able to prepare and interpret tables, graphs, histograms, bar charts and pie charts.

**Internal factors affecting businesses in the pursuit of their objectives**

Candidates should understand the interrelationships between people, finance and marketing aspects of business.

Production has not been given a separate heading. However, some study of production, its problems and its interrelationships with other sections of business and the economy is implicit.



## Subject Content

## Guidance Notes

### SECTION 2

The interpretation of simple balance sheets. Sources of capital; relationship between short and long term capital. Capital gearing. The deployment of capital between different types of assets. Depreciation policies. Investment decisions including the principles of DCF. The importance and management of cash flow.

The distinction between capital and revenue.

The nature of income and expenditure. The profit and loss account and determination of profit. Profit utilisation. Effects of sustained losses.

Fixed and variable expenditure. Break-even point. Pricing methods.

The nature and significance of key accounting ratios.

The effect of inflation on the accuracy of balance sheets and reported profits

### SECTION 3

The role of marketing in the firm. Marketing decisions - price, quality, packaging, product differentiation, advertising, sales promotion, sales force, distribution, transportation. The constraint of competition. Sources of information including market research. Marketing and the interrelationship between people, investment, production, quality, price and profits. Obsolescence and innovation of products and production methods.

### SECTION 4

The importance of people in achieving objectives. Employer and employee relationships.

Recruitment, selection and training. The means, cost and returns of training.

Negotiation (including a study of trade union and employer organisations).

Collective bargaining. Remuneration and other conditions of employment; termination of employment. Bargaining positions; conciliation and arbitration, the role of the state in wage bargaining and conditions of employment.

Factors influencing motivation - reward, job responsibility and involvement, problems of communication; job satisfaction and achievement; leadership styles; delegation.

This section does not require a study of bookkeeping techniques.

Candidates should be able to examine the published accounts of a firm and be able to say whether the firm is doing well or badly - and to take into account inflation when coming to their conclusions. They should also be capable of interpreting accounting reports and financial reports. Aspects of cash flow management to be studied include stock-control, debt factoring, leasing versus purchasing.

Candidates will be expected to have a knowledge of the functions of marketing and a general outline of procedure. They should be able to discuss the forms and ethics of advertising. Marketing as an integrating procedure should be an important part of the course.

The trade union elements should not include a history of the movement, except as it affects present day conditions.

## Subject Content

Factors external to business which affect the attainment of objectives.

### **SECTION 5**

Economic considerations. Changes in demand, investment, output and employment. The United Kingdom's role as a trading nation and its dependence on international trade, the susceptibility of British business to world economic conditions.

Government policy - the effects of home and overseas governments' action and policies on business in the United Kingdom.

Legal considerations - the effects of local, national and international legislation on British business, with particular reference to employee protection, consumer protection and company law.

Social considerations - pressure groups, changing attitudes to work and authority, the physical and social environments, sociological structure of markets at home and overseas, the current ethical climate.

The integrated nature of business decisions and objectives.

### **SECTION 6**

A study of business reveals themes which emphasise both the integrated nature of the business world itself and its integration in turn with the society of which it is a part.

## Guidance Notes

This section allows the candidates to examine the problems that businesses have to face resulting from the actions of organisations outside the firm.

Legislation concerning business is extremely wide and candidates will not be expected to have detailed knowledge of the contents of different Acts but rather a knowledge of the effects of legislation on business. Candidates should be aware of any appropriate legislation that is enacted during their course.

The main areas of legislation that should be examined are:  
constitution of business organisations;  
consumer protection;  
terms and conditions of employment.

This section is not designed to introduce additional areas of study into the syllabus, but should rather be seen as an opportunity of bringing together the work already covered in the five preceding sections.

Candidates will be rewarded for using an integrative approach throughout the examination and will be given a particular opportunity to demonstrate this skill in Section A of Paper 2. Candidates' attention should be drawn to the aims of the syllabus.

This information has been extracted from:



### 3 - BTEC Business & Finance Syllabus

The BTEC First Diploma in Business & Finance has four compulsory subjects and four optional subjects; the compulsory subjects being:

***"Business World - looks at the different ways organisations are structured and how they work. This subject covers the relationship between businesses and the wider community, and between organisations and their customers.***

***Administrative Systems and Procedures - looks at ways of storing and finding information, and develops a range of communication skills, including written, telephone and fax communication. This subject includes using word processing and spreadsheet packages and information processing equipment to produce a variety of business documents. It also covers health and safety, and the importance of developing good business relationships.***

***Business Resources and Procedures - examines the financial, physical and human resources used by a business. This subject also covers basic accounting, and looks at ways of measuring how well a job or task is carried out.***

***People in Business - covers the role of people in an organisation, including rights and responsibilities between employers and employees. It looks at job roles and how they fit in with the organisation's goals. Students also develop a career plan as part of this subject."***

The four optional units available in a BTEC First Diploma in Business & Finance can vary depending upon the resources of the centre. They can be drawn from the following areas: Administrative Support; Business Information Technology; Consumer Law; Customer Care; European Business; Insurance; Languages; Production; Travel and Tourism.

The BTEC National Programme in Business & Finance (1993b) all programmes contain ***Working in Organisations***. This is made up of eight compulsory subjects. There are then a number of optional subjects available; four in the National Certificate and eight in the National Diploma. The compulsory subjects in ***Working in Organisations*** are:

***"Business Structures and Goals - looks at the sorts of goals that organisations have, and how they structure themselves to achieve their goals.***

***Business Environment - investigates the UK's business and industrial structure, the government's role in the economy, the banking and financial sector and international trading relationships.***

***Marketing Process - covers the market system, evaluating potential markets for a product, gathering market information and responding to external factors. Students develop a marketing plan.***

***Physical Resources - examines the physical resources, such as buildings, materials and communication systems, used by different organisations.***

***Financial Resources - covers preparing a budget for a business project and interpreting financial statements. It also looks at the financial***

- needs of organisations.

**Human Resources** - analyses the human resources of an organisation. It looks at aspects of personnel management, such as appraisal systems, training and disciplinary procedures. It also develops skills in planning and time management.

**Administrative Systems** - investigates the roles and responsibilities of individuals within an organisation. It examines different communication and administrative systems, and students develop information technology skills.

**Innovation and Change** - looks at the constant need for innovation and the factors that cause change in organisations and the business world. Students examine the impact of change on people at work, and make recommendations for change in a particular organisation."

The optional units available in the BTEC National Programme in Business & Finance extend the subject range when compared to those offered in the BTEC First Diploma, and topics are covered in greater detail. Selection of optional subject can be drawn from: Accounting Procedures; Advertising; Banking; Behaviour at Work; Business European Studies; Business Information Technology; Business Law; Business Location and the Environment; Business Statistics; Financial Planning and Control; Housing Studies; Insurance; International Marketing; International Trade; Languages; Library and Information Work; Personnel Policies and Procedures; Sales; Small Business Enterprise; Social Care and the Community; Transport; Travel and Tourism.

In addition to all of these, each BTEC programme aims to develop a range of general, transferable skills. These skills are termed 'Common Skills' and cover such areas as: self-development; learning and studying; self-management and organisation; working with others; communicating; information seeking and analysis; numeracy; practical skills; science and technology skills; and design skills (Warren 1988).



#### **4 - RSA Background to Business Syllabus**

The **RSA Background to Business** stage I syllabus topics specified for this level, by the RSA in 1990a (pp.30-34) are:

##### **Goods and Services**

The range of goods and services purchased by an average family;  
Changes in patterns of consumer expenditure;  
Consumerables/Durables;  
The provision of goods and services in the public and private sectors.

##### **Organization of Production**

The development of specialization both by product and by process, indicating the resulting increase in productivity;  
Distribution of the working population by industry;  
Occupations within a selected industry;  
National occupational structure;  
The main purposes of Trade Unions and employers' organisations;  
Simple treatment of the different forms of ownership in both the private and public sectors;  
Size and type of companies - multinational/medium sized/ small, drawing attention to location, product range, markets, numbers employed and turnover;  
Organizational structure within the firm. Functions of basic departments in theory.

##### **Marketing**

Marketing and its role in business enterprise;  
The need for a distribution system;  
Goods and services;  
Retailing function;  
Wholesaling function;  
Need for documentation in buying and selling in the home trade;  
Outline of the main purpose of legislation relating to buying and selling in the home trade.

##### **Insurance Services Required by Business**

Importance of insurance for business;  
Insurable and uninsurable risks;  
The pooling of risks;  
A general overview of the insurance institutions to meeting business needs;  
Selecting and taking out an insurance policy;  
Basic principles of insurance.

##### **Financial Services Required by Business**

The main purpose of accounting;  
Cost, revenue, profit, turnover in relation to a trading business;  
The main elements of the Balance Sheet;  
Current and deposit accounts, loans and..

Giro (bank and Post Office);  
Sources and uses of finance.

### **Business and the Framework in which it Operates**

This unit could be incorporated in a continuing study of the firm (unit 2); This unit should draw on and unify the work which has been covered in previous units of the syllabus.

The syllabus content for **RSA Background to Business at Stage II**, as specified by the RSA in 1990a (pp.38-43), is as follows:

### **Business Organizations**

This involves being able to distinguish between two different types of firms; drawing up organizational charts and explaining the functions undertaken by businesses in relation to the environment in which it operates; consideration of national economies and the opportunities and threats encountered therein; legal distinctions of business organizations.

### **Finance**

Explanations of accounting functions; consideration of the main accounting processes; the use of financial ratios; sources of finance; the function of the Stock Exchange and the function of foreign trade. A case study is given to reinforce issues discussed.

### **Insurance**

General; Principles; Organisations; and Types of Insurance.

### **Communications**

Systems; Public and Industrial Relations; Meetings/Forums/ Discussions; Formal communication Structures; Channels of Communication; and noted exceptions.

### **Transport**

Transport to internal/national markets; Transport to international markets; 'Real World' transport examples; Passenger transport.

### **Marketing**

Marketing in general; Legislative aspects of marketing; Distributive aspects of marketing - (i) Consumer & (ii) Industrial.

### **Competitors**

In a given market; Competitive devices; Patterns - national and international. Implement all of the above using a case history.

### **Government and other Organizations**

State provision; Government influences over the firm due to legislation; Contributions to and from the government; Government regulation of the market;



Government and non-government aid and advice available.

### **Raw Materials and Commercial Services**

Supply and demand; Functions of the buyer, seller; distributor; middle man.

### **Labour**

As a resource; the impact of technological advance; Changes in terms of economic environments; Administrative aspects; The role of Trade Unions.

### **Technology**

Current trends; Changes

### **International Economy**

Patterns of international trade; The export of goods and services.

The syllabus content for **RSA Background to Business at Stage III**, as specified by the RSA in 1988 (pp.47-50), is as follows:

### **Business**

Planning; Operations; Control; Measuring and Evaluating Performance; Business Dynamics.

### **Technological Change**

Innovation including its impact, its management, the necessary awareness; Access to information; Decision making.

Using case material, analyse marketing information and produce a policy for product planning. Analyse the implication of technological change.

### **Legal Aspects**

Relating to 'real situations' discuss the setting up of a business; trading; contractual obligations; consumer protection; health and safety; and employment law.

### **Economic 'Climate'**

Government economic policy;  
Trends in Consumer spending and market opportunity;  
Levels and direction of investment;  
Competition.

### **Socio-Political Aspects**

Private, public and national industries; The distribution of wealth; Business Obligations - depending on sector; Political, social, and environmental issues, including conflicts; De-industrialisation; The concept of value added; In reality.

## **5 - NVQ Business Administration**

Typical competences under consideration in the NVQ Business Administration as suggested by the RSA (1990b, c, & d) are as follows:

### **Level 1 Units:**

1	Filing	
2	Communication Information	Level II (ASF)
3	Data Processing	Level II (AF)
4	Processing Petty Cash & Invoices	Level II (AS)
5	Stock Handling	Level II (ASF)
6	Mail Handling	Level II (ASF)
7	Reprographics	Level II (ASF)
8	Liaising with Callers & Colleagues	Level II (ASF)
9	Health & Safety	Level II (ASF)

A - Administration      S - Secretarial      F - Financial: denoting the units providing 'credit towards' Level II accreditation for particular routes.

C&G (1988c p.1) when discussing Business Administration Level 1 also include units of Telecommunications (which is covered in the Communication Information unit of RSA); Elementary Keyboard Skills which is covered in the Data Processing unit of RSA); and Office Consumables. Stock Holding is the unit to be found in the RSA programme.

### **Level II Administration Units:**

2	Communication Information *
3	Data Processing
4	Processing Petty Cash & Invoices
5	Stock Handling*
6	Mail Handling*
7	Reprographics*
8	Liaising with Callers & Colleagues*
9	Health & Safety*
10	Creating and Maintaining Business Relationships*
11	Providing Information to Customers/Clients*
12	Storing and Supplying Information*
13	Information Processing*
14	Telecommunications and Data Transmission
15	Reception
19	Arranging Travel and Meetings
20	Processing Payments

### **Level II Secretarial Units:**

2	Communication Information *
4	Processing Petty Cash & Invoices
5	Stock Handling*
6	Mail Handling*
7	Reprographics*



- 8 - Liaising with Callers & Colleagues\*
- 9 Health & Safety\*
- 10 Creating and Maintaining Business Relationships\*
- 11 Providing Information to Customers/Clients\*
- 12 Storing and Supplying Information\*
- 13 Information Processing\*
- 14 Telecommunications and Data Transmission
- 15 Reception
- 16 Text Processing
- 17 Audio Transcription OR
- 18 Shorthand Transcription
- 19 Arranging Travel and Meetings

#### **Level II Financial Units:**

- 2 Communication Information \*
- 3 Data Processing
- 5 Stock Handling\*
- 6 Mail Handling\*
- 7 Reprographics\*
- 8 Liaising with Callers & Colleagues\*
- 9 Health & Safety\*
- 10 Creating and Maintaining Business Relationships\*
- 11 Providing Information to Customers/Clients\*
- 12 Storing and Supplying Information\*
- 13 Information Processing\*
- 20 Processing Payments
- 21 Processing Documents Relating to Goods and Services
- 22 Processing Payroll
- 23 Maintaining Financial Records

\* Common Units for all Level II Routes

The C&G (1988c p.2) data also identifies the three optional routes of administration, secretarial and financial. Unit titles for Level II include focus on telecommunications, various financial record keeping methods and computer applications, in line with the RSA units detailed above.

**GNVQ Business Intermediate Level** four mandatory units must be studied:

**Business Organisations and Employment** - this covers the types of public and private sector business organisations: their roles, locations and products; and investigates the UK employment market.

**People in Business Organisations** - this examines the job functions of individuals within businesses and the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees.

**Financial Transactions** - you learn how to record and present financial information for a business over a period of time; covering sales, purchases, payments, receipts and security.

**Consumers and Customers** - this investigates the relationship between a business and its customers; consumer demand for goods and services, how these are met; how a business looks after its customers and how it promotes its products. (BTEC 1993b)

GNVQ Business Intermediate Level - two Optional Units must be taken. These can be chosen from a range such as those offered by BTEC (1993b):

**Operating Administrative Systems** - this examines the systems normally found in a business organisation. Looks at types of office services and equipment; reception procedures; organisation of meetings; business travel and accommodation arrangements.

**Financial Recording** - this extends the knowledge gained in financial documentation in the Mandatory Unit. It covers recording and monitoring simple financial transactions; calculating wages and salaries; stock recording and control.

**Information for Business in Europe** - this focuses on the skills needed by a business functioning in Europe; currency transactions; comparison of costs in EC countries; the rights and responsibilities of business travellers throughout the EC.

**Selling** - this investigates and analyses selling methods in the retail sector: the ways in which different retailers attract and retain customers; personal selling skills; customer care and service.

The Additional Units which BTEC (1993b) offer include: at Intermediate Level: Production Systems; Business Enterprise; The Organisation and the Community; Personal Finance; and Retail Practice.

**GNVQ Business Advanced Level** - eight Mandatory Units studied, building on the learning achievements of the Intermediate Level. The Mandatory Units are:

**Business in the Economy** - this examines why businesses exist, the supply of goods and services by businesses, different methods of managing economies and the effect of government policy on business decisions and actions.



**Business Systems** - this investigates administration, information processing and communication systems and assesses how they can meet the needs of the organisation and improve business performance.

**Marketing** - this covers market research and sale forecasting techniques, how businesses use market information to identify consumer demand and how they provide goods and services to their customers.

**Human Resources** - this looks at how an organisation manages its workforce to improve business performance, examines types of business organisations and the job functions of the individuals in them, and evaluates the effectiveness of different recruitment methods.

**Employment in the Market Economy** - this investigates employment trends in the UK and EC and their different business sectors, examines external influences, such as new technology or government intervention on employment, and the measures businesses take to respond to these; analyses working practices and employee performance in different organisations.

**Financial Transactions and Monitoring** - this explains the purpose and use of financial transaction documents, covering purchase, payment, sales and receipts documents and investigates ways of monitoring business performance by analysing accounting information.

**Financial Resources** - this examines financial planning, sources of finance, budgets, cash flow, the direct and indirect costs of goods and services, profit and loss statements and balance sheets.

**Business Planning** - here you collect all the necessary legal, financial and marketing data to produce a business plan and a sales and marketing plan for a product or service (BTEC 1993b).

**GNVQ Business Advanced Level** - four Optional Units must be studied. These can be chosen from a range such as those offered by BTEC (1993b):

**Business Law** - this covers the legal implications of business transactions: legal structures, status and formation of companies; responsibilities, relationships and liabilities; contracts; consumer rights and protection; legal procedures through the courts.

**Financial Services** - this examines the financial needs and services of different business organisations: methods of obtaining capital and protection against risk or loss; analysis of the effectiveness and competitiveness of different financial services, including insurance companies, banks, building societies, investment managers and government agencies.

**Financial Planning and Monitoring** - here you discover how organisations use financial information in making business decisions and assessing business performance: by comparing different methods of financial management; examining the ways in which

they monitor use of their financial resources; and investigating the factors considered in preparing budgets.

**Production** - this unit builds on the Mandatory Units Business Planning and Marketing. It examines production methods in different organisations; how purchasing, production, design, marketing, finance and personnel are coordinated. The student prepares a production plan, taking into account all of the above factors.

**Design** - here the student evaluates the impact of various design techniques; analyse customer requirements; and prepare a design working to a brief - for example for a brochure, leaflet or new office lay-out.

**Business Within Europe** - this focuses on the knowledge and skills needed by a business functioning in Europe. It gives an overview of economic and social trends in different regions within the EC; identifies potential business activities in them; investigates ways of establishing new markets.

**Behaviour at Work** - this looks at behaviour of individuals and groups at work and shows how that behaviour can be influenced by management attitudes and styles.

**Foreign Language: Listening** - this develops the ability to understand a foreign language in every day and business contexts. The student learns to follow simple conversations, understand telephone messages and television or radio broadcasts.

**Foreign Language: Speaking** - here the student develops the ability to communicate in every day situations, conduct simple conversations and acquire some business vocabulary.

The Additional Units which BTEC (1993b) offer include: at Advance Level: Corporate Identity, Sales, Advertising, Small Business Enterprise, Introduction to Insurance, Financial Accounting, International Trade, Social Environment of Business, Quantitative Methods for Business, and Administrative Support.

The **Key Skills** units of GNVQ Business are the same regardless of whether the course is offered by BTEC, C&G, or the RSA. The Key Skills of communication, information technology and application of number are essential and certificated at the level of GNVQ studied:

**Communication** - this covers interpreting language and using it to present information and ideas, through the processes of speaking, listening, writing and reading.

**Application of Number** - this includes gathering and processing data, representing and tackling problems and interpreting and presenting data in a practical context.

**Information Technology** - uses information technology to carry out practical tasks in work-related situations.



**DAMAGED  
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**Theme 1: Planning**

*The way the student lays down how s/he will approach and monitor the tasks/activities undertaken during a period of learning*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
1 <i>Drawing up plans of action</i>	Student independently draws up plans of action for a series of discrete tasks. The plans promise the different tasks within the given time period.	Student independently draws up plans of action for complex activities. The plans promise the different tasks within the given time period.
2 <i>Monitoring courses of action</i>	Student independently identifies points at which monitoring is necessary and recognises where revisions to courses of action are necessary. Appropriate revisions to plans are made with guidance from teacher/tutor.	Student independently identifies points at which monitoring is necessary and recognises where revisions to courses of action are necessary. Appropriate revisions to plans are made independently.

**Theme 2: Information seeking and information handling**

*The way the student identifies and uses information sources.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
3 <i>Identifying information needs</i>	Student independently identifies information requirements for a series of discrete tasks.	Student independently identifies the information requirements for complex activities.
4 <i>Identifying and using sources to obtain information</i>	Student independently accesses and collects relevant information for a series of discrete tasks. Student identifies principal sources independently and additional sources are identified by the teacher/tutor.	Student independently accesses and collects relevant information for complex activities. Student uses a range of sources, and justifies their selection.

**Theme 3: Evaluation**

*The way the student retrospectively reviews the activities undertaken; the decisions taken in the course of that work; alternative courses of action which s/he might have adopted.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
5 <i>Evaluating outcomes and justifying approaches</i>	Student judges outcomes against original criteria for success, justifies the approach used and indicates that alternatives were identified and considered.	Student judges outcomes against original criteria for success and justifies the approach used with a detailed consideration of relevant advantages and disadvantages. Alternatives and improvements are identified.

**Theme 4: Quality of outcomes**

*The way the student synthesises knowledge, skills and understanding, and demonstrates the command of the 'language' of the GNVQ area.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
6 <i>Synthesis</i>	Student's work demonstrates an effective synthesis of knowledge, skills and understanding in response to discrete tasks.	Student's work demonstrates an effective synthesis of knowledge, skills and understanding in response to complex activities.
7 <i>Command of 'language'</i>	Student's work demonstrates an effective command of the 'language' <sup>1</sup> of the GNVQ area at Foundation/ Intermediate level <sup>2</sup> .	Student's work demonstrates a fluent command of the 'language' <sup>1</sup> of the GNVQ area at Foundation/Intermediate level <sup>2</sup> .



**Theme 1: Planning**

*The way the student lays down how s/he will approach and monitor the tasks/activities undertaken during a period of learning*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
1 <i>Drawing up plans of action</i>	Student independently draws up plans of action for a series of discrete tasks. The plans prioritise the different tasks within the given time period.	Student independently draws up plans of action for complex activities. The plans prioritise the different tasks within the given time period.
2 <i>Monitoring courses of action</i>	Student independently identifies points at which monitoring is necessary and recognises where revisions to courses of action are necessary. Appropriate revisions to plans are made with guidance from teacher/tutor.	Student independently identifies points at which monitoring is necessary and recognises where revisions to courses of action are necessary. Appropriate revisions to plans are made independently.

**Theme 2: Information seeking and information handling**

*The way the student identifies and uses information sources, and checks and establishes the validity of the information obtained from these sources.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
3 <i>Identifying and using sources to obtain information</i>	Student independently identifies, accesses and collects relevant information for a series of discrete tasks. Student identifies principal sources independently and additional sources are identified by the teacher/tutor.	Student independently identifies, accesses and collects relevant information for complex activities. Student uses a range of sources, and justifies their selection.
4 <i>Establishing the validity of information</i>	Student independently identifies information which requires checking for validity. Student checks validity of information using given methods.	Student independently identifies information which requires checking for validity. Student independently selects and applies appropriate methods for checking validity.

**Theme 3: Evaluation**

*The way the student retrospectively reviews the activities undertaken; the decisions taken in the course of that work; alternative courses of action which s/he might have adopted; and examination of the implications of particular courses of action.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
5 <i>Evaluating outcomes and alternatives</i>	Student judges outcomes against original criteria for success; identifies alternative criteria that can be applied in order to judge success of the activities.	Student judges outcomes against original criteria for success and identifies and applies a range of alternative criteria in order to judge success of the activities.
6 <i>Justifying particular approaches to tasks/activities</i>	Student justifies approach used; indicates that alternatives were identified and considered.	Student justifies approach used, basing justification on a detailed consideration of relevant advantages and disadvantages. Alternatives and improvements are identified.

**Theme 4: Quality of outcomes**

*The way the student synthesises knowledge, skills and understanding, and demonstrates the command of the 'language' of the GNVQ area.*

Criterion	Merit	Distinction
7 <i>Synthesis</i>	Student's work demonstrates an effective synthesis of knowledge, skills and understanding in response to discrete tasks.	Student's work demonstrates an effective synthesis of knowledge, skills and understanding in response to complex activities.
8 <i>Command of 'language'</i>	Student's work demonstrates an effective command of the 'language' of the GNVQ area at	Student's work demonstrates a fluent command of the 'language' of the GNVQ area at

**9 - GNVQ Business - Example of Set Assignment  
(Source NCVQ 1997)**

- a) Teacher Guidance: That's Entertainment**
- b) Student Guidance: That's Entertainment**
- c) Resource Pack: That's Entertainment**





GNVQ set assignment

Level	Advanced
Subject	Business
Unit number	1
Unit title	Business in the economy
Document title	Teacher guidance: That's entertainment

Contents

2	Summary of stages
2	Background to the set assignment
4	Stage 1: Preparatory work
5	Stage 2: Set assignment
10	Assessment grid



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## Summary of stages

### Stage 1: Preparatory work (no time limit)

This provides a general research focus for students to prepare for the set assignment.

To be completed before set assignment

### Stage 2: Set assignment (20 hours)

A series of set tasks designed to produce evidence which meets the requirements of the unit specification. Students must complete the assignment within a given time period.

To be completed by end February 1997

Papers and mark sheets to be returned to your awarding body

By 1 March 1997

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## Background to the set assignment

### Introduction

This assignment has been designed to meet the full assessment requirements of this unit. To achieve the assessment requirements students will need to take part in a planned learning programme which covers the underpinning skills and knowledge (content) of the unit.

The assignment has been planned in two parts.

### Stage 1: Preparatory work

This consists of suggested preparatory learning activities. These are based on the background research necessary for the assignment. Students may work in groups, pairs or individually to carry out the tasks involved.

### Stage 2: Set assignment

This is the formal assessment activity. It is a clearly structured activity based on the preparatory work. Students should work individually to plan and produce their own response to the set tasks within the 20-hour time limit.

The teaching team should endeavour to ensure that each student understands:



- that the learning from the programme and the preparatory work have been designed to give them the necessary skills and underpinning knowledge needed for the set assignment
- the areas of understanding covered by the set assignment.

### **Timing assumptions**

In drafting these materials it has been assumed that the set assignment time limit of 20 hours for the four tasks represents approximately one third of the time available for the unit.

### **Prior learning**

This assignment has been designed to draw upon learning from a broad-based programme for Unit 1. Centres could either use the assignment as a vehicle for delivering the whole unit, when combined with taught inputs, or run the assignment at the end of the unit as a summative assessment activity.

### **Preparing for the assignment**

Students should be encouraged to prepare for the assignment well in advance to allow time to research the information. Each student should keep a detailed log of all sources contacted, including those who have not responded, so that credit can be given for the research undertaken. In addition, each centre has a responsibility to ensure that there is adequate information and resources within the library to fully support this assignment. As such it would be useful to ensure that all library staff are fully briefed about the nature of the assignment well in advance so that relevant articles and materials can be collated.

Tutors may find that the evidence for this assignment can also be used for other units that the students are studying for. This is particularly true for the market research which students are required to undertake. Tutors may find it useful to plan assignments for other units around the theme of 'arts and entertainment' so that students can maximise the use of their market-research findings.

## Stage 1: Preparatory work

### Research activities

It is the teaching team's job to motivate the students to meet the assessment requirements. So when planning how to introduce the assignment please refer to the specifications or the assessment grid (based on the specifications) at the back of this guidance.

*Activity 1: Undertake research into the arts and entertainment industry at both a national and regional level, including an in-depth study of a particular type (eg cinema, music, theatre, museum, dance). Your research should attempt to identify the following:*

- *how competitive the market is*
- *factors which influence the demand for and supply of different forms of entertainment*
- *examples of how the Government intervenes to support and regulate the industry.*

*Your research should distinguish between national and regional providers.*

It is suggested that students start their research by looking at the arts and entertainment national provision. The articles included in the Resource pack are intended to provide background information for this phase of the work.

The study of local provision may be undertaken individually or as a group activity. If the study is undertaken as a group activity it is important that each student keeps a detailed log of his or her individual contribution as well as the contributions made by other team members. Progress should be reviewed formally at regular intervals.

In undertaking this activity students should be encouraged to analyse the demand and supply for all forms of entertainment not just those which they are interested in. This is particularly true when the student presents his or her proposals for a new facility or service (Task 4).

In analysing competitiveness students should be encouraged to consider both competitiveness and non-competitiveness. In studying the impact of government on the arts and entertainment sector students should consider the support provided by government (eg financial, publicity, advice) and the regulations imposed (eg monopolies and mergers, licensing, legislation).



*Activity 2: Produce a questionnaire and undertake research into whether people feel that their arts and entertainment interests or needs are currently being catered for in your area. Through the research try and identify an area of the arts and entertainment industry where demand is not currently met by local provision.*

Students should, if possible, prepare their questionnaire before the Christmas break, to maximise their opportunities to interview a broad section of people representing local opinion. Even though students do not need to 'segment' the potential market for arts and entertainment in this unit, it is likely that they will need to consider the views of different groups in order to identify opportunities which meet the requirements for Task 4.

### **Time allocation (centre defined)**

There is no specified time limit for the preparatory work. Centres should set aside a suitable amount of time to meet the needs of their students within programme constraints.

### **Working conditions**

Preparatory work is like any other piece of coursework. Tutors are responsible for managing students' learning and should provide support and advice to meet individual needs.

### **Assessment**

Students are expected to keep records of their preparatory thinking. They are asked to hand in 'the research notes which were most useful'. This evidence will be referred to when making judgements for the *Learning skills* grading theme.

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## **Stage 2: Set assignment**

### **Tasks**

Students will be able to use the 'What to hand in' sheet to help them in generating appropriate evidence. To develop Key Skills it is suggested that at least one piece of evidence is produced using IT. Working from the newspaper articles may provide evidence for Communication Element 2.4. All of the tasks will provide some evidence which may be relevant to Communication Element 2.2.

**Task 1:** *Based on your research into the arts and entertainment industry at the national level in the preparatory work, you must now produce a summary report. Your report should include three main sections.*

*Section 1: Research into the arts and entertainment industry at a national level, identifying how competitive the market is.*

*Section 2: A detailed study of two different markets within the arts and entertainment industry at a national level (such as theatre, dance, music, museums etc) – one competitive, one non-competitive.*

*Section 3: A description of the ways in which the Government intervenes in the arts and entertainment industry.*

The articles mentioned in relation to each section should be regarded as background reading, and not as material for extensive quoting. Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of competitiveness by identifying the characteristics that make the arts and entertainment industry competitive in nature and in the process illustrating why in some circumstances it might be non-competitive. In the process students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the complex nature of markets which can be both competitive and non-competitive. Evidence of students' understanding of non-competitiveness will be further addressed through their proposals for Task 4.

**Task 2:** *Prepare a short presentation on the provision for arts and entertainment within your area suitable for use by your manager at a committee meeting. This should consist of a set of presentation slides which summarise and illustrate the findings of your research. These should cover the following information:*

- *an analysis of the arts and entertainment industry within your area and the different needs that are catered for*
- *the factors which affect the demand and supply of services within your region*
- *how demand has affected the supply of services and prices charged*
- *how competitive the market is*
- *how changes in the conditions of demand and supply might change in the future and how this could affect what is supplied and prices charged.*

This task covers many of the same issues that will have been addressed by students in their work on Task 1, but requires them to produce very different evidence. Students should be encouraged to consider any similarities and or differences between provision in the local area as compared with national provision.



As demand and supply curves are economic tools used to illustrate economic principles and theories students are not expected to provide the actual data to support their diagrams. Instead, they should use the curves to illustrate typical market behaviour. For example, if through their research the students have concluded that the demand for a particular service is elastic then appropriate graphs should be used to illustrate this point.

**Task 3:** *Having undertaken research into opinions within your area to identify whether people feel that their interests and needs are being catered for, summarise your conclusions and support this using appropriate graphical means.*

This task provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to analyse the results of their questionnaire and present their conclusions using graphical means. If possible, students should have access to appropriate IT facilities for this task. However, students should not be penalised for using manual techniques. It is important that students choose appropriate methods for representing their data, including labelling and use of axes, which are best suited to the conclusions which they wish to justify and illustrate.

**Task 4:** *Prepare a written proposal for the development of an aspect of the arts and entertainment industry within your area to be funded by a bid to the National Lottery or other Government funds. In particular your proposal must identify:*

- *an interest or need that is not met by existing services and facilities in your area*
- *a new facility to provide a service to cater for those interests or needs*
- *the characteristics of the interest or need that make it unique*
- *how the conditions in demand and supply for the service might change in the future and how this might affect price*
- *the social costs and benefits to the wider community of your proposal should it prove to be successful.*

*Your recommendations need to be supported by research into the arts and entertainment industry and an investigation of public opinion of the services offered within the area.*

This task is designed to provide an opportunity for students to be creative in their thinking and ideas for a new facility/service. The new facility/service should satisfy demand currently not being catered for in the locality. This criterion may provide an additional opportunity for students to show their understanding of non-competitive markets. The proposal should find support in the market research undertaken and the rationale for the chosen idea.

Students may have the opportunity to use images in producing this proposal, which would be likely to provide evidence for Communication Element 3.3.

Students may find it beneficial to present their proposals to the group, although this may not be feasible within the limited time suggested. An evaluation sheet has been included in the Resource pack for this purpose.

### **Time allocation (20 hours)**

The recommended time for the tasks is 15–20 hours. Suggested timings have been given for each of the four tasks. These have been included to help students and teachers allocate their time effectively. They should not be seen as prescriptive – don't panic; use your discretion. Data will be collected as part of the evaluation on the length of time assignments actually took.

### **Resources**

Students will need access to materials and equipment for producing their written work and illustrations, manually or using a computer.

### **Absence**

If a student is absent for a long period during the preparatory work or task sessions they are unlikely to be able to produce sufficient evidence to meet the full requirements for the unit. However this will be a matter of judgement by centres on a case-by-case basis. As part of pilot evaluation, data may be requested on attendance and the average amount of time students spent working on the preparatory research activities.

### **Students with particular needs**

The standard awarding body regulations regarding students with particular needs will apply to the set assignment. As part of the pilot evaluation, data may be requested on the communication skills of students and any other particular needs.

### **Assessment**

The assessment grid overleaf is based on the unit specification. In judging the evidence please follow your usual professional expertise, discretion and centre policy.

Use the pilot assignment assessment record to record your final judgements.

Please return your completed sheets to your awarding body by 1 March 1997.



### **Controlled conditions**

As part of the evaluation of the pilot it is important that awarding bodies and NCVQ can gauge the effect of differing levels of controlled conditions on student performance in the set assignment. For this reason all centres are asked to operate one specified task in the Advanced assignments under more precise conditions than normal for an activity of this nature.

**In the assignment for Advanced Business this will be Task 3.**

During this task please ensure that the following instructions are followed.

1. The task is to be undertaken and completed in the classroom.
2. The time limit given on the task should be applied.
3. Throughout the time period the students should be under the direct supervision and observation of a tutor.
4. Supervising staff should ensure that the work completed in the session is the students own work and is not the result of collaboration or sharing within the group.
5. Students are allowed to bring in any materials they produced during the preparatory tasks and can use dictionaries, spell checkers or calculators as necessary and any other resources normally available.
6. Students should hand in the completed work at the end of the session.

If any of your students did not complete the specified task under the above conditions or required additional time, please indicate this on the pilot assignment assessment record and provide brief details (eg the extra time required).

Assessment grid

Task	Source of evidence	Pass	Benchmarks for merit	Benchmarks for distinction
1 · A report	A summary report	A summary report which includes:	Learning skills	Learning skills
2 Presentation materials	comparing how external factors affect demand and supply for arts and entertainments services  The market for one product should be competitive, the market for the other non-competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• research into the arts and entertainment industry at a national level</li><li>• the popularity of different forms of entertainment</li><li>• the causes of change in supply and demand for its products and services</li><li>• pricing and non-pricing strategies and</li><li>• an analysis of government intervention into the market</li><li>• characteristics of what makes a market competitive or non-competitive</li></ul> <p>Presentation materials on the local provision for arts and entertainment</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• factors which affect the demand and supply of services within the area</li><li>• the competitive nature of the market</li><li>• how changes in conditions may influence provision in the future market</li></ul>	<p>A plan recording details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how the research will be carried out</li><li>• the evidence needed to undertake a study of the arts and entertainment sector both: at national level; at local level</li><li>• the sources of information to be used and how the information will be gathered</li><li>• the time-scales involved in producing the work</li></ul> <p>Plans are monitored and, if necessary, changed in order to produce the work required</p> <p>Sufficient relevant information is selected from the sources identified</p> <p><b>Quality of outcomes</b></p> <p>The student's work demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• conditions of supply and demand</li><li>• and government policies</li></ul> <p>Influence business decisions relating to the arts and entertainment sector</p> <p>The work shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• awareness that these decisions in turn affect other organisations and the wider community</li><li>• an application of economic theory</li><li>• a basic awareness of underpinning knowledge of this unit</li><li>• the accurate and coherent use of specialist language</li></ul>	<p>The information identified and used by the student shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• evaluation of the relevance and value of the sources of information obtained about the sector both nationally and locally and selects from a wide range of different sources</li><li>• a critical use of information</li></ul> <p>An evaluation of the plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the advantages and disadvantages of the plan</li><li>• suggestions for improving the plan and its implementation and how these alternatives might have improved the outcome</li></ul> <p><b>Quality of outcomes</b></p> <p>The student's work demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• an in-depth analytical understanding of how business decisions in the arts and entertainment sector are made in response to external factors and how these decisions in turn affect competitors and the external environment</li><li>• the drawing together of research about the operation of different organisations and their business decisions in the arts and entertainment sector to ensure a comprehensive coverage of the subject</li><li>• that s/he can, independently, apply relevant economic theory to the case study overall</li></ul>



Assessment grid

Task	Source of evidence	Pass	Benchmarks for merit	Benchmarks for distinction
3 Survey results	Market research into local arts and entertainments	1 Market research into public opinion including the questionnaire and analysis of results	<b>Learning skills</b> A plan recording details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to research</li><li>• the sources of information to be used,</li><li>• how the information will be gathered</li><li>• the time-scales involved in producing the work.</li></ul> Plans are monitored and, if necessary, changed order to produce the work required	<b>Learning skills</b> The information identified and used by the student shows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• evaluation of the relevance and value of the sources of information obtained about the sector both nationally and locally and selects from a wide range of different sources</li><li>• a critical use of information</li></ul> An evaluation of the plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the advantages and disadvantages of the plan</li><li>• suggestions for improving the plan and its implementation and how these alternatives might have improved the outcome</li></ul>
4 Local opportunity proposal	provision identifying a gap in the market	2 Materials used for proposal for a local development a with supporting rationale	Sufficient relevant information is selected from the sources identified  <b>Quality of outcomes</b> The student's work demonstrates an understanding of how conditions of supply and demand influence business decisions relating to the arts and entertainment sector  The work shows a basic awareness of underpinning knowledge of this unit and the accurate and coherent use of specialist language	<b>Quality of outcomes</b> The student's work demonstrates the drawing together of research about the arts and entertainment sector  The work includes analysis of the social costs and benefits of proposals for a new venture



## GNVQ set assignment

Level	Advanced
Subject	Business
Unit number	1
Unit title	Business in the economy
Document title	<b>Student assignment: That's entertainment</b>

### What's in this document

- 3 A: Introduction
- 4 B: Preparatory work
- 5 C: Set assignment
- 8 D: What to hand in



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## A Introduction

Consider the following quotation:

*It is impossible not to be impressed by the sheer breadth of cultural activity in this country. From grand opera to pop, from the Royal Academy to regional theatre, there is something for everybody... On a broad definition of what constitutes our culture today, 80% of the adult population take part in some way, with cinema-going (45%) and stately-home visiting (33%) the most popular, and folk-dancing (3%) and poetry readings (2%) the least. On a narrower definition that takes in seven 'serious' art forms – theatre, art, classical music, ballet, opera, jazz and contemporary dance – 37% of adults, about 17 million people, enjoy the arts in one way or another.*

*'Culture vultures to the hilt' The Sunday Times, 25 August 1996*

This quotation clearly illustrates the high level of demand for arts and entertainment in Britain. It is a highly competitive market involving the public and private sector and charitable organisations offering a continually developing service. It also includes examples of non-competitive behaviour, where a service or facility may be so unusual or targeting a specific audience within a locality, that it has no real competition. As such the sector provides a useful case study through which to investigate the operation of business in the economy.

### **What is the assignment about?**

You are employed as a research assistant by the local authority. Your manager has asked you to investigate opportunities for attracting government funding for a local project in arts and entertainment. This will require you to investigate changes in the demand for different types of entertainment at a national level (such as dance, cinema, museums, music, theatre) and illustrate how this is reflected locally. From your research you will be expected to identify where demand is currently not being catered for in your area and based on this, propose an idea for a new entertainment venture. Your findings and proposals will be used to inform members of the committee involved in making a bid for government funding or to the National Lottery.



## **B : Preparatory work**

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### ● **Research activity 1**

Undertake research into the arts and entertainment industry at both a national and regional level, including an in-depth study of a particular type (eg cinema, music, theatre, museum, dance).

Your research should attempt to identify the following:

- how competitive the market is
- factors which influence the demand for and supply of different forms of entertainment
- examples of how the Government intervenes to support and regulate the industry.

Your research should distinguish between national and regional providers.

.....

### ● **Research activity 2**

Produce a questionnaire and undertake research into whether people feel that their arts and entertainment interests or needs are currently being catered for in your area. Through the research try and identify an area of the arts and entertainment industry where demand is not currently met by local provision.

## C Set assignment

### Planning

Before you start work, write a plan for completing the assignment. This should take account of all the factors involved in preparing for the tasks and also cover your initial research work, if appropriate. It would also include dates or deadlines and likely sources of information that you will need. If you have to adapt this plan in any way you should keep notes on the changes and the reasons for making them.

- **Task 1** (suggested time 10 hours)

Based on your research into the arts and entertainment industry at the national level in the preparatory work, you must now produce a summary report. Your report should include three main sections.

**Section 1: Research into the arts and entertainment industry at a national level, identifying how competitive the market is.**

Your analysis should identify the popularity of different forms of entertainment (you may find the article 'Culture vultures to the hilt' *The Sunday Times*, 25 August 1996 useful, although you should support this with further research of your own from such sources as *The Annual Abstract*, *Social Trends*, and *The Economist*). You need to demonstrate your understanding of competitiveness by identifying the characteristics which makes a market competitive or non-competitive.

**Section 2: A detailed study of two different markets within the arts and entertainment industry at a national level (such as theatre, dance, music, museums etc) – one competitive, one non-competitive, identifying:**

- the causes of change in supply and demand for its products and services in each market
- the pricing and non-pricing strategies used to improve the market position
- the ways in which these changes influence the range of services offered and the pricing decisions for the market



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- the effect of level of services and pricing on competitor organisations
- how changes in demand relate to price elasticity.

The articles 'CDs top of the pops' *The Observer*, 13 February 1994, 'Local theatres face "spiral of decline"' *The Guardian*, 31 May 1995, and 'Juke box fury' *The Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994 may be of help although you should support this with further research of your own.

### **Section 3: A description of the ways in which the Government intervenes in the arts and entertainment industry.**

This should include the development of services using government grants and lottery money. In addition consideration should be given to how activities may be monitored by regulatory bodies such as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Your investigation should consider the ways the Government has been able to support and regulate the activities of the entertainment industry ('WH Smith plans to form biggest UK music chain; Virgin Retail' *The Times*, 3 March 1994, 'Giveaway of the century; National Lottery' *The Times*, 25 March 1995 and 'Music companies hit by £50 million cost of CD probe' *The Observer*, 22 May 1994 may be useful although you should support this with further research of your own).

#### **• Task 2** (suggested time 4 hours)

Prepare a short presentation on the provision for arts and entertainment within your area suitable for use by your manager at a committee meeting. This should consist of a set of presentation slides which summarise and illustrate the findings of your research. These should cover the following information:

- an analysis of the arts and entertainment industry within your area and the different needs that are catered for
- the factors which affect the demand and supply of services within your area
- how demand has affected the supply of services and prices charged
- how competitive the market is



- how changes in the conditions of demand and supply might change in the future and how this could affect what is supplied and prices charged.

- **Task 3** (suggested time 2 hours)

Having undertaken research into opinions within your area to identify whether people feel that their interests and needs are being catered for, summarise your conclusions and support this using appropriate graphical means.

- **Task 4** (Suggested time 4 hours)

Prepare a written proposal for the development of an aspect of the arts and entertainment industry within your area to be funded by a bid to the National Lottery or other Government funds.

In particular your proposal must identify:

- an interest or need that is not met by existing services and facilities in your area
- a new facility to provide a service to cater for those interests or needs
- the characteristics of the interest or need that make it unique
- how the conditions in demand and supply for the service might change in the future and how this might affect price
- the social costs and benefits to the wider community of your proposal should it prove to be successful.

Your recommendations need to be supported by research into the arts and entertainment industry and an investigation of public opinion of the services offered within the area.

(The article 'Up to your ears in art' *The Sunday Times*, 29 January 1995 may be helpful but should be further supported by research of your own.)

**D What to hand in**

- 1 A summary report which provides an analysis of the competitive nature of the arts and entertainment industry at a national level [Task 1]
- 2 Presentation materials on the arts and entertainment industry within your area incorporating visual and written information [Task 2]
- 3 A copy of the original questionnaire used to seek opinions and written and graphical analyses of the results [Task 3]
- 4 A copy of the proposal including a written rationale in support of your ideas [Task 4]

In addition, any written materials or plans which provide evidence on how you planned the tasks, gathered information or evaluated your work.





GNVQ set assignment

Level	Advanced
Subject	Business
Unit number	1
Unit title	Business in the economy
Document title	Resource pack: That's entertainment

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## **Resource pack contents**

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**'CDs top of the pops' *The Observer*, 13 February 1994**

**'Culture vultures to the hilt' *The Sunday Times*, 25 August 1996**

**'Giveaway of the century; National Lottery' *The Times*, 25 March 1995**

**'Juke box fury' *The Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994**

**'Local theatres face "spiral of decline"' *The Guardian*, 31 May 1995**

**'Music companies hit by £50 million cost of CD probe' *The Observer*, 22 May 1994**

**'Up to your ears in art' *The Sunday Times*, 29 January 1995**

**'WH Smith plans to form biggest UK music chain; Virgin Retail' *The Times*, 3 March 1994**

## **A Guidance for students**

The aim of this assignment is to help you apply the economic concepts of supply and demand to an interesting and thought provoking case study. It is important that you appreciate that although the market for arts and entertainment is in itself extremely competitive you will be able to illustrate your understanding of non competitive markets by identifying a service or facility which will cater for such a specific need or interest in your region that there will be no real competition for it at least in the short term. Examples at a national level may include the Glastonbury Music Festival, the Imperial War Museum and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival which because of their unique nature face no real competition within their niche market.

A number of newspaper articles have been provided to support the assignment. Even if you don't use them all or quote from them within your work it is important that you read them thoroughly so that you have a broad understanding of the arts and entertainment market. You should also undertake your own research and refer to this in your work as this will form part of the criteria on which you are graded.

Your tutor may suggest that you undertake the survey of local provision for arts and entertainment and present your findings as part of a small group activity. If this is the case it is important that you document very carefully your own individual contributions and those of other group members.



**B Background information**

'CDs top of the pops' *The Observer*, 13 February 1994

The Guardian and The Observer on CD-ROM

SOURCE: The Observer DATE: 13 February 1994 BUS PAGE: 01  
CDs top of the pops  
EMILY BELL

THE British record industry played its way out of recession in 1993, increasing sales to pounds 785.7 million, a 13.5 per cent improvement on 1992.

Figures out tomorrow will show that the revival in recorded music was spearheaded by compact discs which sold 92.9 million copies. This makes it the best-selling format in history, a title previously held by vinyl LPs which sold 91.6 million in 1975.

The cheering news will coincide with the UK music industry's glittering Brit Awards ceremony, to be held at Alexandra Palace tomorrow evening. Rupert Perry, chairman of British Phonographic Industries and head of EMI Records, says: 'This really is the end of the recession for us. We never believed all the claims that pop music was dead.'

A further boost was the growth in the CD single, fuelled almost entirely by the success of teen heartthrob five-piece Take That. CD single sales rose 40 per cent to pounds 45.1 million from 1992 and now represent more than half the pounds 85.4 million singles market.

One reason for pop music's revival has been the decline in the sale of computer games, which compete for the disposable income of the crucial 13 to 19 age group. While the Brit Awards will furnish pop's glitterati with ample opportunity for self-congratulation, Perry says there are still a number of issues challenging the industry.

Most notable is the pending MMC inquiry into compact disc pricing, although the spectre of a forced price reduction has receded with the growth in mid-price and cut-price CDs and the closing of the differential between the US and UK.

'We also have the outcome of the George Michael court case coming up this year which could have implications for the whole industry,' says Perry. The messy divorce proceedings between the vocalist and his record label Sony threatens to change the status of contracts between artist and record company.

A further matter for concern has been the failure of British artists to pull in overseas sales. 'We haven't fared so well in the US recently, and that is a very big market,' says Perry.

He also criticises the BBC over the radical changes at pop radio station Radio One. 'While I accept that they had to attract a younger audience for Radio One, there is now a massive audience of 25 to 45-year-olds who have no BBC station catering for their needs. A natural solution would be to revamp Radio 2 for that audience', he says.

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**TEXT BOUND  
INTO  
THE SPINE**



'Culture vultures to the hilt' *The Sunday Times*, 25 August 1996

10-4 COVER STORY

25 AUGUST 1996 · THE SUNDAY TIMES

# Culture vultures

British arts lovers are spoilt for choice. But who are they and what keeps them coming back for more?

**ROBERT HEWISON** finds that while class and sex explain much, a taste for adventure is breaking down stereotypes among the young

**I**t is impossible not to be impressed by the sheer breadth of cultural activity in this country. From grand opera to pop, from the Royal Academy to regional theatre, there is something for everybody. The explosion of events at the Edinburgh Festival alone (90 companies in the official programme, 646 on the Fringe this year) suggests that our appetite for the arts is unlimited.

On a broad definition of what constitutes our culture today, 80% of the adult population take part in some way, with cinema-going (45%) and stately-home visiting (33%) the most popular, and folk-dancing (3%) and poetry readings (2%) the least. On a narrower definition that takes in seven "serious" art forms — theatre, art, classical music, ballet, opera, jazz and contemporary dance — 37% of adults, about 17m people, enjoy the arts in one way or another.

Yet who are these people, and how genuinely cultured are they? The Victorian moralist Matthew Arnold defined culture as "the study of perfection" and "the best that has been thought and said in the world". Today, that privileged preserve of the elite has been thrown open to all. The old hierarchy of taste that put the classical art forms at the top of the pyramid and mass entertainment at the bottom has given way to a supermarket of styles, where people pick 'n' mix their cultural pleasures. The culture of consumption has us eating hot dogs at the Three Tenors concert, and spending as much time in the Tate Gallery's shop and cafe (45 minutes) as looking at its pictures. We need to know not only how many people go to arts activities, but why they go and what they bring away.

We sent reporters to a cross section of events: the Proms at the Albert Hall, the Richard Wilson exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, the musical *Maria Guerre*, Ibsen's *John Gabriel Burckman* at the National Theatre and the film



**The Cultured**

Jeremy Cultured simply lives for the arts. At 48, he would really like to buy a large house in the country, but can't bear the thought of the craft fairs and amateur dramatics he would feel obliged to attend. "I would simply die without Mahler," he insists. Jeremy goes to the theatre at least once a month — Shakespeare, Chekhov, Stoppard. He bristles with indignation when the audience is full of tourists. He once ran a small arts discussion group, but gave it up. "How can I put it politely?" he says. "The other members could not provide the intellectual nourishment for which I was searching." Jeremy, after all, is no lightweight: he is not only a "friend" of several art galleries and on the mailing list of many London theatres and the Royal Opera, but he can name every piece of incidental music on *Inspector Morse*.

*Based on research from the Department of National Heritage, ABSA, the Arts Council, Greater London Arts, the BBC, the National Theatre and Robert Hewison*

*Independence Day* at the Odeon Leicester Square. They came back with replies running from the bored, "I'm only here because my girlfriend wanted to come" (*Serpentine*), to the specialist, "I came to see how the substitute conductor handles the orchestra" (*the Proms*) — see page 6.

Our random findings didn't always match the claims of the statistical surveys that have become a

key weapon in the fight to feed and retain audiences. These surveys show that, in spite of the democratisation of taste, class is still a significant factor in cultural consumption. Regardless of the mixture of "high" and "low" art forms on the shelves, today's cultural supermarket is still more Sainsbury's than Kwik Save. A survey conducted in 1993 for the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA), covering

8,000 people at 170 different venues, confirmed the correlation of class and culture. Nearly half the audience were senior managers, professionals, self-employed or business owners; 29% had a household income of more than £30,000, 13% more than £45,000. Only 8% were in clerical or manual jobs.

This pattern is reflected across individual art forms. 26% of the upper-middle and middle class say



**The Keen**

A languages student, Josh Keen loves everything about the arts as long as it's cheap. He queues for the Proms in the summer, but in the winter his favourite night out is a film followed by a simple meal at a cheap French brasserie (the cinema and cafe both offer student discounts). He'll try anything once, though, and is a frequent visitor to the Winne Mandela Arts Complex near his college. He thought the recent Zambian a cappella quartet was "cool", but is keeping an open mind about the Bulgarian dance troupe's depiction of 19th-century Turkish atrocities. It has, however, made him determined to read up on the history of the Balkans, just as soon as he has finished his book about Zambia. When Josh leaves college, he will take a wage-slave job, lose interest in the arts, and buy CDs of Oasis and Blur.

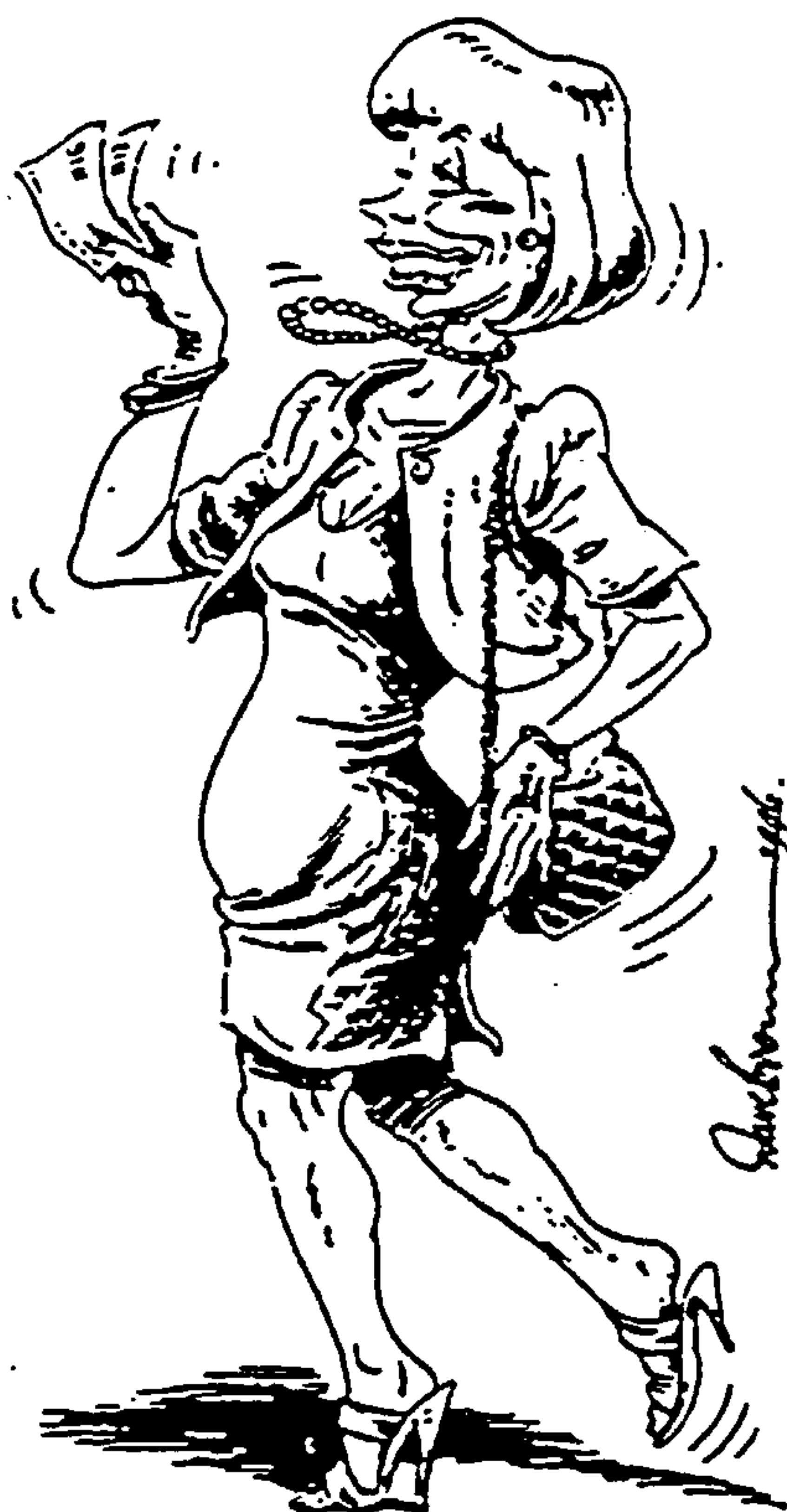
they go to classical music concerts only 6% of skilled workers, working class and underclass. Of visitors to the Tate Gallery, 95% are soundly middle-class, 80% of the 72,000 Friends of the Royal Academy are upper-middle and middle class, "with a strong bias" to upper-middle, and no working class. A 1990 survey of London artgoers concluded that they are "typically middle-aged (35-55)



THE SUNDAY TIMES · 25 AUGUST 1995

COVER 51

# to the hilt



## The Casual

What with the kids and the part-time number as a market research interviewer, Ros Casual has to be choosy about the arts. She doesn't go very often, but when she does she dresses up and makes it a real evening out. She normally goes with Helen, an old college friend, because husband Peter says he's too tired after work and there's usually some television sport to keep him in. Actually, he just can't stand ballet, which is Ros's particular favourite (she loves the weepy bits). She likes theatre, and has seen *Les Misérables* five times. "It was so moving," she says, "and Helen couldn't stop blubbing." She thinks *The Piano* was the best film she has ever seen, and she has learnt so much about art from Sister Wendy that she and Helen are planning a trip to the local municipal gallery.

Roland White

middle-class (ABC1) and white".

However, 17m people hardly constitute an elite and, anyway, by the year 2000 half the population is expected to be middle-class. While class and cash do, indeed, make a difference to the make-up of the audience at the Royal Opera House and the Odeon, it is useful to look at the arts in terms of a league table of attendances, not forgetting that the different availability of opera, with

fewer than 10 full-scale companies, and cinema, with 2,000 screens, is a significant factor in their relative popularity — see box on page 7.

Quantitative research, however, has its limits. Audiences are becoming more sophisticated in their choices, and we need more sophisticated ways of understanding them. It is the quality of the arts experience that counts and turns the casual visitor into a regular

attender. Reputedly one reason for going to the Tate is "romance" — the chance of being "picked up".

In 1994 Greater London Arts hired Mass Observation UK to interview 1,000 typical Londoners, a cross section of people who went to arts events, and those who did not. Most hoped to see things that left them feeling happy (32%), and treated the arts as a social outing (60%). Most didn't want to work too hard at trying to understand what was going on (34%), but an equal number expected to feel uplifted by what they saw. There was a general reluctance to see things people didn't know much about, though those who did go regularly to arts events (35%) were much more adventurous than those who did not (60%). Surprisingly few (33%) thought of the arts in terms of helping forget about day-to-day life — the arts seem to be about reality, not escape.

In 1993 a close-up picture of a specific group of culture vultures emerged when the National Theatre commissioned a report from the Harris Research Centre. Just as we have divided today's audience into the Cultured, the Keen and the Casual (left), Harris divided the National's audience into Frequent Attenders, going six or more times a year; Occasional Attenders, who went about three times; and Non-Attenders, who none the less did go to the West End, where they saw National productions that had transferred to the commercial sector.

The core audience at the National turned out to be more up-market and older than most mainstream theatre-goers. Frequent Attenders were "theatre junkies", some going up to three times a week, who gave such reasons for going as "to leave the world outside", "a deep emotional experience", "to be frozen in my seat". For them the National was like a club. "The audience at the National is far more intelligent," one said, which is probably why Non-Attenders thought the National was "not for them". That same atmosphere made Occasional Attenders treat a visit to the National as a special event to dress up for — and therefore have a higher expectation.

The National's survey makes the important point that an art form's fanatics — the theatre junkie, the concert-hall season-ticket holder, the gallery regular — are not necessarily the most discerning or broad-minded. Occasional Attenders at the National also went to opera and ballet, and the Non-Attenders felt they had a wider choice, not only in the West End but also in cinema and sport. If we are to follow Arnold's dictum and seek out "the best" then the truly

Continued on page 6



Based on: the Corn Exchange Sever

## A group of concert subscribers e buzz of live music to PENNY

These are the faces of music-lovers, above, enthusiasts who meet once a month at the Eagle in Cambridge. There they have a glass of wine, walk to the Corn Exchange and listen to a classical concert in the same box each time (the one nearest the bar). Afterwards, they discuss the music over dinner. It is a stylish evening, they agree, and always entirely enjoyable.

"It is a lifetime," says Charles Webb, one of seven friends who will soon embark on their fifth season subscribing to the Corn Exchange's classical concerts. "When I am feeling stressed I focus on the next concert. They are very soothing."

As ventures go, the Corn Exchange is more friendly than elaborate, but that does not stop it attracting reasonable orchestras. Next season's programme includes the London Mozart Players, the Birmingham and Birmingham Symphony Orchestras and the Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra.

What the group shares is a keen enjoyment of music as a pleasure, rather than an intellectual pursuit. They do not follow scores, and only David Bird, a former choirboy, has more than an enthusiast's knowledge.

Webb, 31, and a member of British Airways flying staff, and his sister, Janet Chapman, a cardiographer of 50, learnt to play the piano as children; both also regularly listen to live jazz. Webb's interest in classical music developed as a student at King's College, Cambridge, where he went to Evensong. "Cambridge has a bit of a town-gown mentality, but we're not worried by that. For us there is no wall between attached to classical music, so none

of us feels we're doing what we're not doing."

"It's very thing," says a friend. "The audience is very young, probably brought up to go out with young children."

For that reason, says Webb, 38, the group has started only in recent years to recruit chapel. "It's a something live, gives you a buzz in Verona that really gave me

Subscribing down at 500 per concert the is ably good value the group to us otherwise com. Some they have enthused about and found them in the modern of James MacM found Correlli.

They all coll buying a CD, have seen and another advance venue is that happy to meet they pack up.

While the classical group, some of them the theatre or Chapman, a in adores to experiences: "If 'Have a ticket would be Eton were to chove. Does I would Little. It is no playing, which she has a radiu



## 10.6 COVER STORY

25 AUGUST 1994 THE SUNDAY TIMES

Continued from page 5

cultured will look for it in more than one art form.

When you are running an arts centre that has a concert hall, a theatre and a cinema, there is a commercial as well as cultural interest in promoting crossover. Yet the crossover between the audience for music and drama at London's Barbican Centre is relatively small, about 16% in each direction, although the crossover from both theatre and music to the Barbican cinema, however, is higher: 26%. ABSA's 1993 survey showed that 40% of their sample went to an arts event once a month, music being the most popular (32%), with theatre (23%) beating cinema (9%) and opera or art (8%).

Culture cultures turn out to move in a series of overlapping circles, as our interviews show. Visitors to the Tate Gallery are, as you would expect, interested in all forms of visual culture — film, design, architecture — but, while their performing art of choice is theatre, they have little interest in opera or ballet. Nationally, classical-music-lovers go more often to the theatre and art galleries than they do to opera, and have little interest in contemporary dance. London contemporary-dance-lovers, however, are also ballet fans, and, in turn, nearly half of them go to opera and two-thirds to the theatre.

Although our spot survey might suggest otherwise, probably the most "cultured" audience is the one for the Proms, which is distinguished in itself for willing well over 30% of seats, whereas the London average for concerts is about 10%. There 300,000 people have a higher interest in all other art forms than the usual classical crowd, especially art, and although they have the same age profile as the rest of the London classical-music audience, they are younger than the national average. An explanation can be found in their social make-up: one survey showed that two-thirds of Promgoers were part of the marketing industry's C1 category (lower-middle-class, the social group in which they automatically place all students), in contrast to the roughly one-third turnout of C1s revealed in a more recent survey at the Festival Hall. Further clues about Promgoers are all too visible in the Last Night audience: they are slightly more male than female (54%) whereas provincial classical-music audiences are more female (55%).

Sex and age, as well as class, turn out to be determining factors in what makes an art-lover. Overall, men are slightly more active across a broad range of events, but that is because this includes cinemas and rock concerts. Women's preference for theatre and musicals is strongly brought out by research conducted for Les Muses (57% are female) and Miss Saigon (75%).

The age range at Miss Saigon was 20% 10-24, 18% 25-34, 31% 35-39 and 21% 50-64, with 45% coming from overseas, two-thirds of them American. At the Civic Theatre in Darlington only 6% of the audience

## How varied are our tastes?

The audiences at five arts events taking place in London last week were asked why they had attended that event, whether they would go to any of the others and what their wider artistic interests were.



Fleur Anderson, 20, said "I can't stand Ibsen." Independence Day was in her diary of 70%. Only one person had seen the Leonard Woolf exhibition. Vicky, 20. She had also seen everything else on our list, but was dismissive: Independence Day, "bad with a big budget"; the Proms, "I wouldn't go again of my own accord"; Borkman, "it's very dull."

John Edwards, 30, said "I can't stand Ibsen." Independence Day was in her diary of 70%. Only one person had seen the Leonard Woolf exhibition. Vicky, 20. She had also seen everything else on our list, but was dismissive: Independence Day, "bad with a big budget"; the Proms, "I wouldn't go again of my own accord"; Borkman, "it's very dull."

were under 24, 14% were 25-34, 23% 35-44, 28% 45-54 and 18% 55-64 (the number of Americans is not recorded). Attendance at arts events tends to drop off with increasing age, but at the same time moves up the Arnoldian hierarchy of taste.

Pop concerts and movies are the province of the young, museums are popular with the thirtysomething, and classical music, opera, theatre and ballet the province of the 40-plus. Strikingly, the average age of the 72,000 people recently female who subscribe as Friends of the Royal Academy is 59.

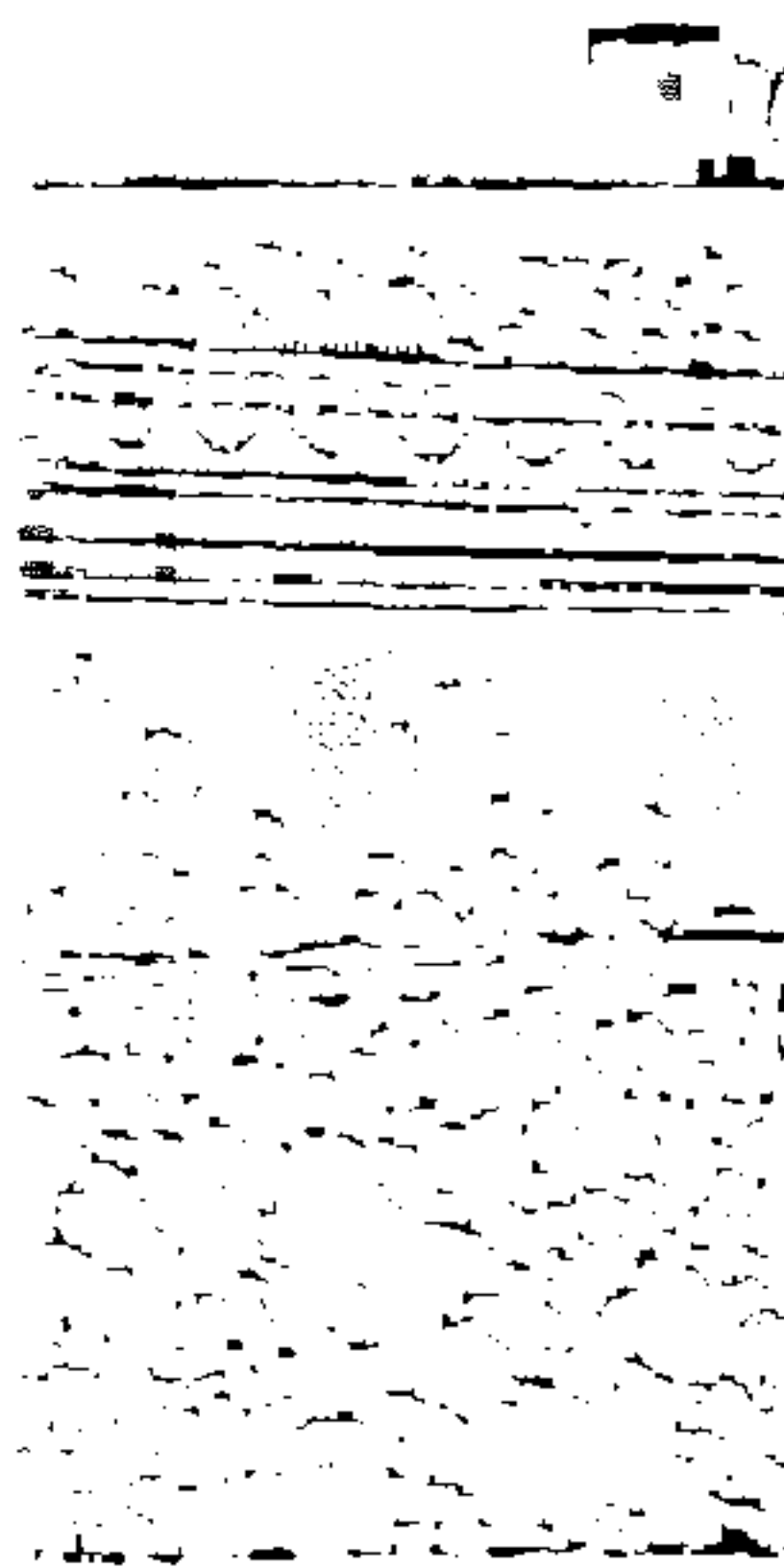
What all the surveys and statistics demonstrate is that the

audience for the arts is a moving target. Some of the most sophisticated thinking about tomorrow's audience has been done at London's South Bank Centre, which faces the particular problem of an ageing and declining audience for classical music. There, the range of events, from classical concerts to ballroom dancing in the foyer, has been rethought to create entry points that might lead the traditional art-lover to experiment with jazz and the rocker to visit the concert hall. The evidence is that among the young — always the most willing to experiment — a new cultural form is emerging, which the South Bank is busy promoting as "21st-Century Culture".

David Schon, who began programming this new phenomenon two years ago, says that the speed and flexibility of modern communications is producing a new challenge. "The old rules no longer apply, there is a level of understanding that simply wasn't there before." Performed by the shunned contemporary composers of this world, and enjoyed by those traditionally excluded from art centres, 21st-Century Culture is a "postmodernist mixture of film, avant-garde pop, Third World music, performance art, contemporary classical music and installation art."

This is a genuinely crossover culture, but Schon warns: "you cannot force a crossover. It always has to be art-led. The traditional villages of the art forms are breaking up, so people move naturally. They don't know they are crossing over, they are just going to things they like."

With 21st-Century Culture now making up a quarter of South Bank events, some kind of cultural redefinition is taking place. As this new audience roves through various arts, without committing itself exclusively to any, we are going to have to add a new category to the Cultured, the Keen and the Casual: the Crossover.



John Edwards, 30, said "I can't stand Ibsen." Independence Day was in her diary of 70%. Only one person had seen the Leonard Woolf exhibition. Vicky, 20. She had also seen everything else on our list, but was dismissive: Independence Day, "bad with a big budget"; the Proms, "I wouldn't go again of my own accord"; Borkman, "it's very dull."



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## Proms

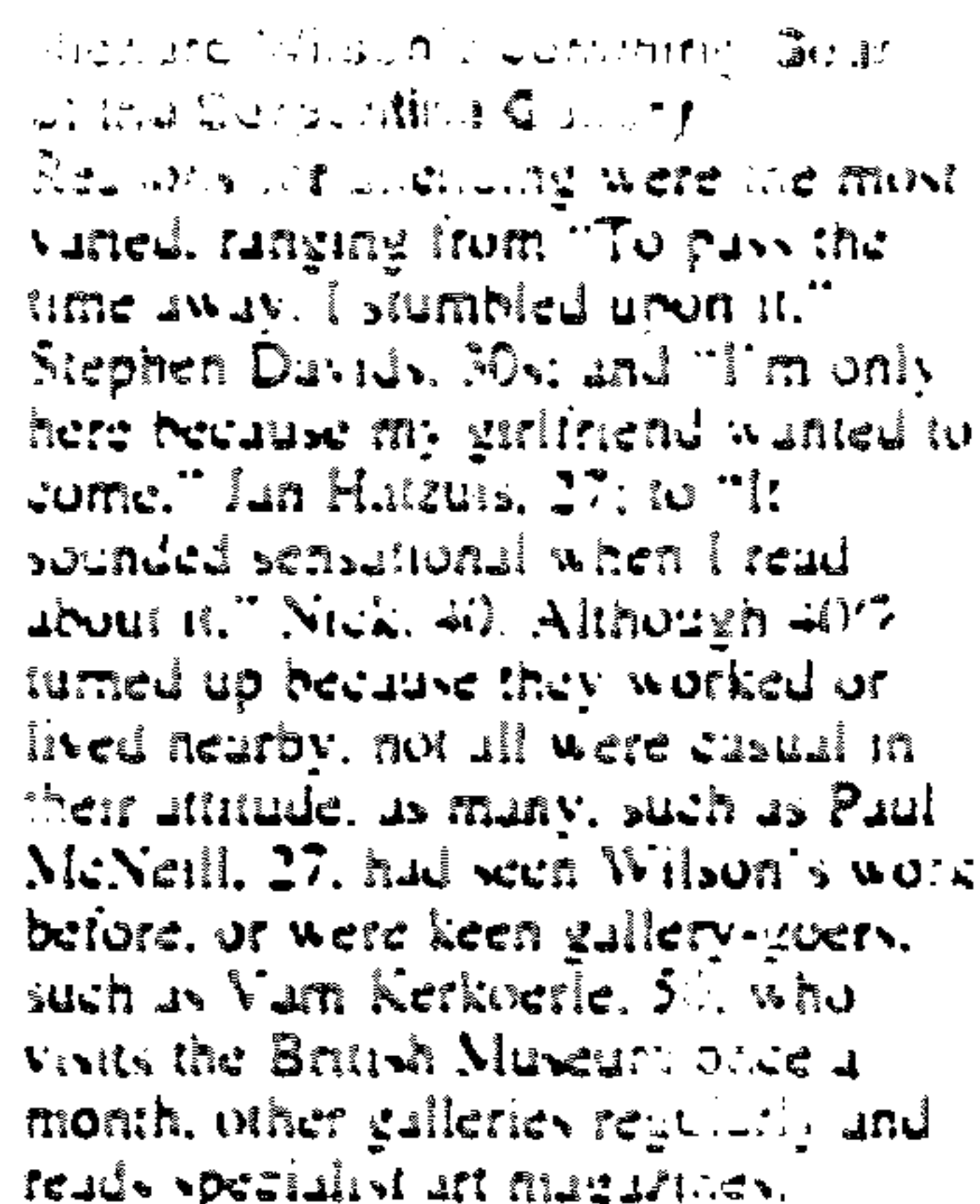
The Proms, which took place at the Royal Albert Hall, was the most attended of the five events, with 300,000 people. The programme included a mix of music, from Grieg songs and Mahler's 9th Symphony to contemporary composers. Reasons for attending included: "I'm a season-ticket holder and come here all the time," Caroline Slater, 34. "It's one of those things you must do," Tom Jennings, 20. "I came to see how the conductor handles the orchestra," Brian Easter, 52. Half of those interviewed claimed also to be interested in theatre and cinema, yet not one of them intended to see any of our other selected events, with the exception of Independence Day. 60% were planning to see, or had seen already. The Proms audience emerges as clearly the most informed and focused, yet also the most narrow in terms of other artistic interests. Half declared themselves as "art-lovers": "I come to concerts all the time. Not much room for anything else, I'm afraid," Brian Easter. "I generally go to concerts. The Proms are excellent," Charlotte Kirby, 19.

## National Theatre

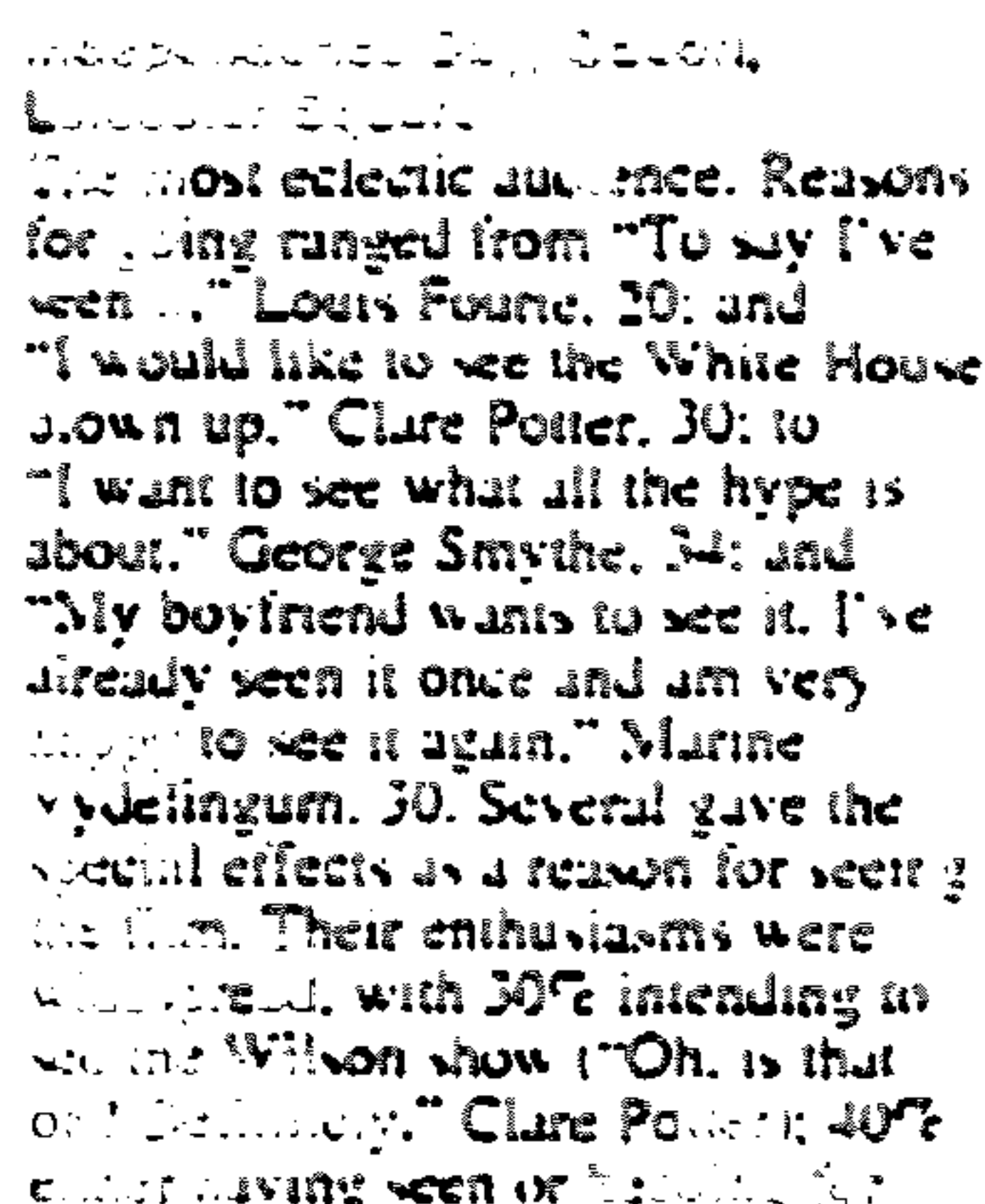
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THE LONDON TIMES - 23 AUGUST 1944

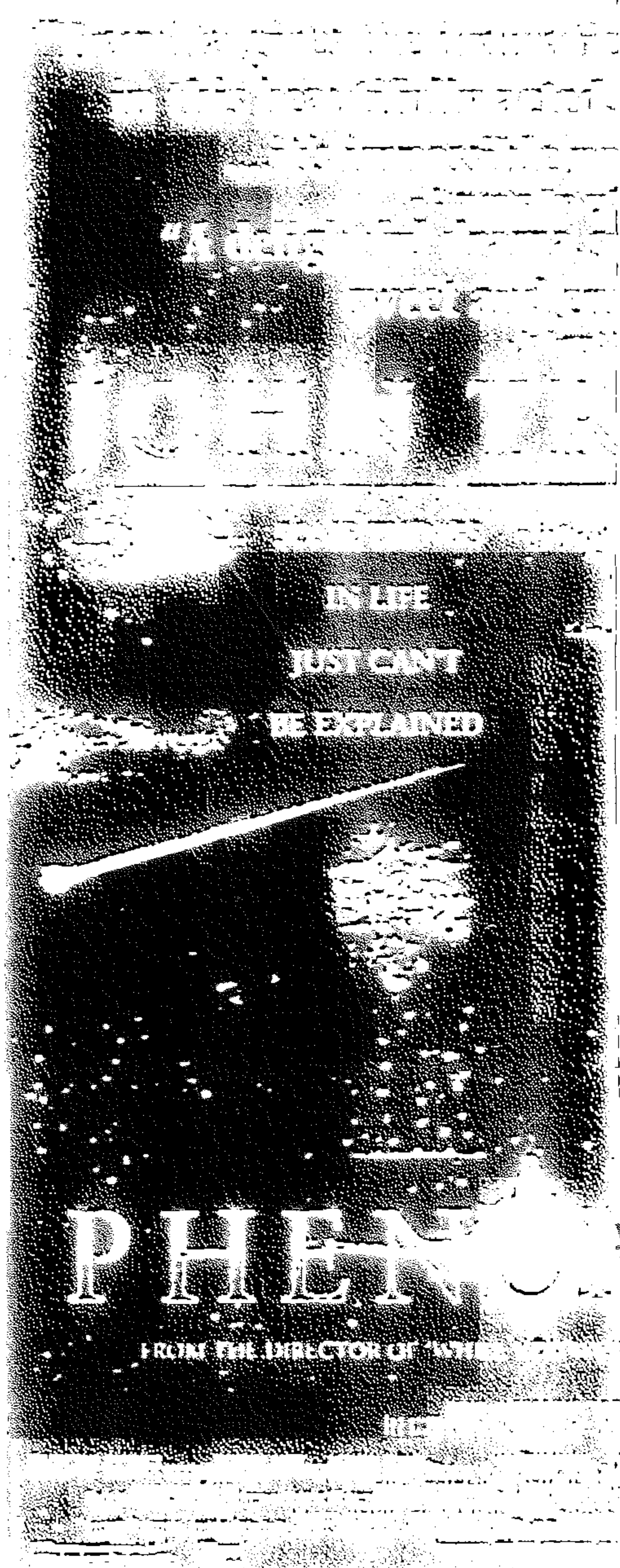
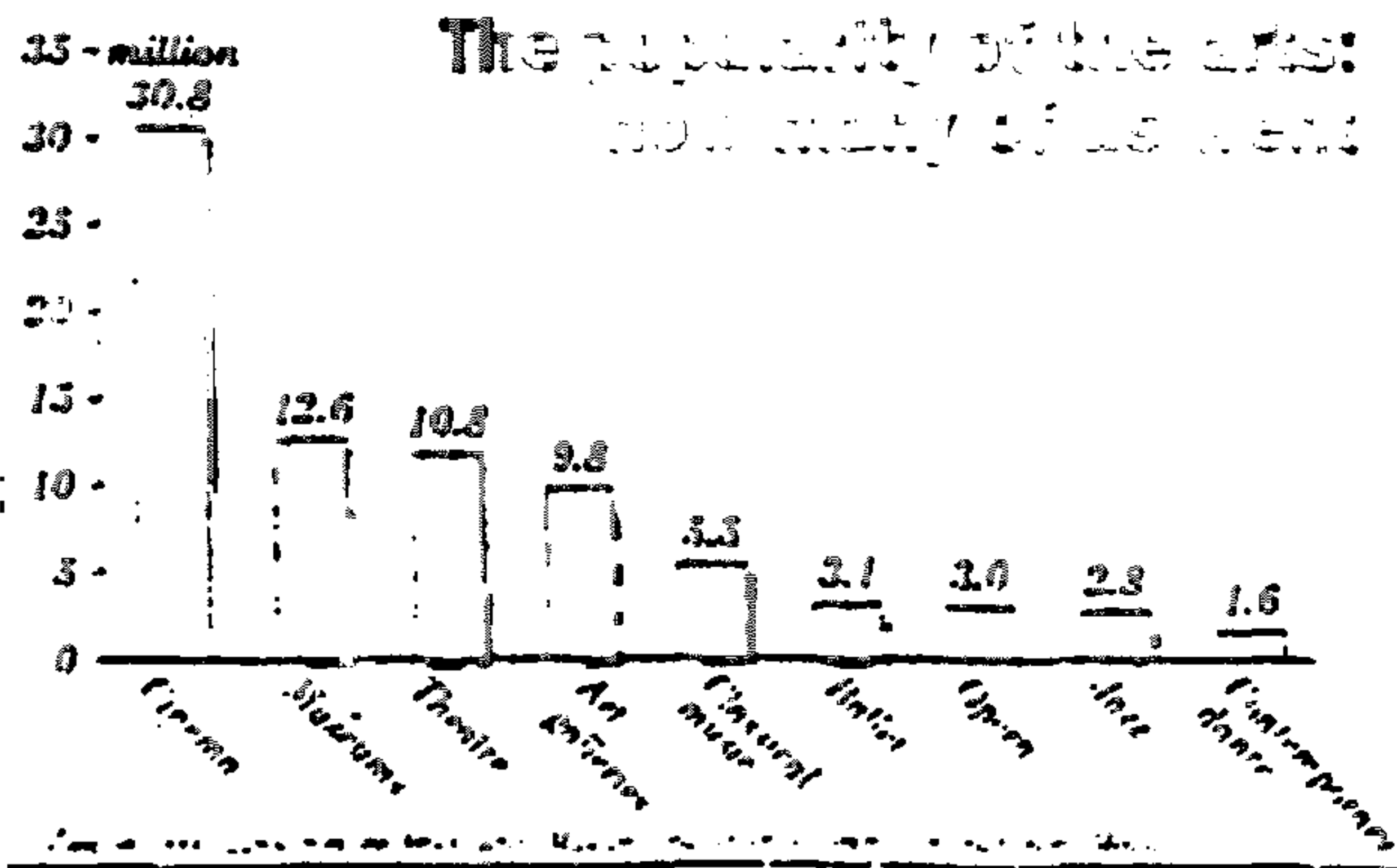


Overall, SOZ were familiar with other work by Wilson. The art-lovers' tastes ranged widely, SOZ having seen or intending to see Independence Day and John Gabriel Borkman at the National Theatre, and SOZ heading for the Proms; SOZ thought they might go to Martin Guerre. All, including Jan Hatzuis, go to exhibitions on a fairly regular basis.



Marcel Guerin, 50, for the Proms; and 30% for Britten. Most said they had an interest in all arts. Again, Ibsen and the Proms came in for criticism for instance. "Ibsen is too depressing, not top of my list," Claire Potter, while Banga, 28, who goes to English National Opera and some concerts, said: "I like classical music, but not the Proms."

Kennedy - N.Y. (cont.)



1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398</
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## 'Giveaway of the century; National Lottery' *The Times*, 25 March 1995

The Times and The Sunday Times Compact Disc Edition

SOURCE: The Times      DATE: 25 March 1995      PAGE: TM/18  
Giveaway of the century; National Lottery; Arts  
Joanna Pitman

Never before has this country contemplated such a colossal potential boom or faced such a fiendishly complicated dilemma. Ten thousand million pounds is expected to be available over the next five years to endow Britain's arts, sports, heritage, charities and other good causes.

A few years ago this might have been dismissed as a fanciful dream, but now that millions among us have acquired the habit of spending a portion of our savings week after week on tickets for the National Lottery, hundreds of millions of pounds are already flooding into special Lottery fund accounts.

This week marks the first rounds of early announcements as to who gets the booty and how much. Of the turnover from lottery ticket sales, 50 per cent goes in prizes, and 15 per cent is earmarked for administration, 12 per cent for tax, leaving 23 per cent for quarterly or monthly distribution to the Arts Council, the Sports Council, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, a National Lottery Charity Board, and to the Millennium Commission, a special rolling five-year fund which has been established to finance projects to mark the turn of the century.

Each of the five already has over Pounds 40 million in the kitty, is banking a further Pounds 4 million a week, and expects to have at least Pounds 150 million to spend this year. The new munificence has set the creative juices flowing among all sorts of organisations accustomed to starvation levels of public funding. Proposals are pouring in from architects, politicians, local government, bureaucrats, academics, and community centres all planning an orgy of developments. And enquiries have been flooding the switchboards of special hot lines set up by the five funds.

The Sports Council has logged 11,000 serious requests, ranging from the Pounds 60 million contribution towards the new Manchester national stadium, to a small sports club in Devon wanting Pounds 10,000 to extend its changing rooms and build a new community sports hall. The Arts Council, meanwhile, has been similarly besieged with enquiries from the chronically underfunded arts world, ranging from the Pounds 60 million scheme to turn the South Bank Centre into a new Crystal Palace, to the more modest application for Pounds 5,000 to improve the lighting in Puddlestone village hall, North Herefordshire.

Trustees on the board of the Millennium Commission perceived, for some reason, as the jackpot fund are personally under siege, some of them receiving up to 100 proposals a week from such organisations as the British Dragon Boat Racing Association, which has lodged an ambitious application for Pounds 500,000 to build an activity centre.

The benefits to the nation of wise distributions are potentially enormous. But so are the dangers of hurried or ill-judged distributions. With the stakes so high, and the erroneous perception rife that the money is to be handed out on a first come first served basis, the brave teams of trustees and board members weighing up the merits of the thousands of proposals must be acutely aware of their responsibilities.



The perils and temptations are clear. As Giles Worsley, editor of *Perspectives on Architecture* points out: "Untried sums will shortly be available for capital projects, and what better form of capital projects could there be than new buildings? They can be exciting, prestigious and are solid and visible proof of how the money has been spent. As French presidents and mayors know, nothing boosts the ego or raises local prestige more than a monumental new building. But building simply because the money is available is wrong. That way lies extravagant waste. Organisations tempted by the idea should be doubly cautious. The lottery cannot subsidise running costs. The embarrassing spectres of under-funded white elephants hover on the horizon."

There appears to be, among the mountains of preposals, a predominance of "bricks and mortar" projects those involving spectacular new buildings and what appear to be vanity monuments, rather than the restoration or enhancement of existing assets.

Take, for example, the proposal to build a 100 metre tower in Glasgow, shaped like a giant rider, that would revolve in the prevailing wind. Do we really want to be able to gauge the wind direction especially at a cost of Pounds 5.2 million? The design has been commissioned by the Glasgow Development Agency from the London architect Richard Horden (who designed the new grandstand at Epsom racecourse). It is planned to commemorate the millennium, and appears to have no higher function, apart from offering a revolving panoramic viewpoint for visitors, leased space for communication antennae, and a restaurant and event area at the base, with a glass roof through which diners may watch the tower spin overhead.

And what of the proposal to throw a giant commemorative gateway over the motorway just outside Leeds? Or the plan to erect a Pounds 9.5 million giant Ferris wheel opposite the Houses of Parliament? This one, proposed by the architect David Marks with the design consultancy Ove Arup, would be sited in the Jubilee Gardens next to County Hall and would, according to Marks, be the biggest wheel in the world, standing 200ft taller than Big Ben. Britain's answer to the Eiffel Tower.

Whatever for? We've never felt the need to answer the Eiffel Tower before, let alone with the world's biggest wheel. To be fair, Marks is not directly seeking lottery money to construct the thing, but he is hoping it might receive a handout from the Millennium Commission as part of a London Millennium Festival centred on the Thames.

With the early bias among proposals towards large-scale, high-profile projects, there is a widespread anxiety that these will quickly Hoover up most of the available funds, leaving insufficient for the small endeavours. And the indicators do indeed point to an advantage for the grander schemes from those established organisations best placed to fulfil the external funding criteria, whose contacts in large architectural firms are equipped to produce the most detailed and convincing plans.

But not all the giant applications appear to be opportunistic or unworthy. Many, such as the Tate Gallery's Pounds 100 million plan to develop the Bankside Power Station into a new Tate Gallery of Modern Art, can plead a deserving cause. "London has been waiting for a new modern art gallery for over 50 years," says Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate Gallery. "Bankside will provide a permanent showcase for the Tate's large collection of paintings and sculpture which has had to be partially displayed on a rotating basis at Millbank, the Tate Gallery St Ives and the Tate Gallery Liverpool. It will offer 120,000 square feet of gallery space in which to show existing and new audiences the art of the 20th century."



The Millennium Commission will provide no more than 50 per cent of any project cost. The Tate has already spent Pounds 3 million on initial development on building feasibility studies and a competition to select an architect and in order to secure any Millennium Commission funds, will need to show clearly from where the balance of funds is expected to come.

"Several pledges of seven-figure sums have been made if it goes ahead," says Serota who stresses that the project is not contingent on a successful lottery application. "But if we don't get lottery funds, we'll just have to think again. It'll happen eventually. Remember, it took 35 years to get the National Theatre built."

The Tate's application is being made in the expectation that it will be among the dozen major capital projects to be designated by the Millennium Commission as landmarks for the 21st century. Politically, these projects will have to reflect a geographical spread, which means that in at least one case, that of Wales, there is a winner virtually guaranteed through lack of alternative.

The Cardiff Bay Opera House, the planned permanent home for Welsh National Opera, is to date the only Welsh applicant for large-scale funds as a 21st century landmark, and it is unfortunate that this particular project has been mired in shameful public chaos. The original winner of the architectural competition, Zaha Hadid, met with such fierce local opposition to her futuristic vision, that she was forced to compete in a shamolic re-run against the other finalists. This confirmed her as the winner, but the opposition rumbles on.

While the Millennium Commission is inundated with applications for hundreds of millions of pounds, the Arts Council is desperately keen to be seen to support small projects at least in the initial rounds of handouts, and is trying to encourage the large lump-sum seekers to hold off. Many of them, hoping to complete their project to mark the millennium, had originally planned to apply to the Millennium Commission.

(Who sits on the Arts Council lottery selection board, but will of course respectfully bow out when it comes to consideration of his own scheme) plans to throw a new, undulating outer skin over the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Hayward Gallery and Purcell Room, enclosing them in a "temperate micro climate" and adding new canopied plazas and retail outlets.

As the lottery lure grows with every Saturday evening draw so do the dimensions and ambitions of the proposed schemes for festivals and follies seeking good-cause money. Every self-respecting architectural knight must, it seems, have entered at least one grandiose project for lottery funding, and prospective clients are wooing them from all directions in the belief that the big names will enhance their funding prospects.

Sir Norman Foster has at least three under his belt Albertopolis, the British Museum and the Manchester Station and has put in a bid for a fourth, the Cardiff Opera House. All are huge projects, but of the three the most gargantuan in cost, scope and ambition is Albertopolis, a scheme to link the South Kensington museums with the Albert Hall, the Royal College of Music, the Royal College of Art, and possibly the Albert Memorial, with a network of underground malls and plazas, and to erect three new buildings within the grounds of the existing museum: a museum of the 21st century at the Victoria & Albert Museum, a Bioprism living jungle in the Natural History Museum, and a Centre of New Technology at the Science Museum.

At the British Museum, he has taken in part of the 250th anniversary programme of development, a Pounds 50 million project to open up the inner courtyard after the departure of the British Library to its new premises at



St Pancras. His scheme will reopen and develop Robert Smirke's original building of the 1820s that had been hidden by the Round Reading Room, to house new public galleries, a centre for education, and expanded catering and retail areas.

The number of big capital projects seeking consideration has grown so fast that they are now being tossed like hot potatoes from one good cause fund to another. The English National Opera plans a Pounds 15 million restoration of the Coliseum. Southwark Environment Trust plans a Pounds 30 million park restoration and development project. The Greenwich Waterfront Partnership plans a Pounds 200 million development with new tourist sights, urban regeneration and housing. And so the list goes on.

Some of the funds are going to have to bend over backwards to cater for small projects and to avoid neglecting deteriorating assets. With 63 cathedrals in need of repair, and over half a million listed buildings needing support, there is surely a strong argument to be made for putting existing fabric in order.

Lord Rothschild, chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, says that the Heritage Lottery Fund could be disbursing as much as Pounds 500 million a year when the lottery really gets going. But it will be looking long and hard at the case for new buildings, and will be reluctant to answer for a violent tilt towards capital projects that only put a further strain on revenue costs.

The NHLF has a broad remit to cover the acquisition, conservation or restoration of historic buildings, landscapes, objects or collections of importance to the heritage. Typical of the sort of proposal it might welcome is that for a new Ruskin Library at Lancaster University, designed by the architect Richard MacCormac to house the archive of the Victorian writer and critic, John Ruskin.

"Like all the other lottery funds, the NHLF is terribly worried about building white elephants," says Michael Wheeler, director of the Ruskin Programme. "We have shown that we have resources to run the building once it is open, and that we have partnership funding to cover one third of the capital costs. The project to move the archive from Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight to a new Ruskin Library is part of a conservation programme that will develop into a centre for Ruskin studies."

Another low-profile restoration proposal on the cards is the plan to replace the Georgian and Victorian railings torn down from city streets during the war to be used for scrap, and never or inappropriately replaced. And what about the inspired idea to bury electricity pylons across the country? Local rural communities without access to the likes of Sir Richard Rogers for monumental designs should be able to benefit from lottery funds too.

The West Midlands Arts Board, for example, wants every local village hall to apply for funds for repair or improvement of facilities. "There seem to be far too many telephone number applications for expensive capital projects. The public should be fairly represented all over the country at all levels," says Philip Thompson, lottery officer for the WMA. He has organised regular "surgeries" for possible applicants to explain the potential for funding in his region.

The intention to support such modest schemes will benefit not only those local communities that have difficulty competing for orthodox funding, but also some of the smaller architectural practices that are typically overshadowed by the leading firms. "Lottery funding of new projects seems to be rather chaotic and biased towards the big practices working on big



schemes," says Simon Allford, a young architect who has recently set up his own London practice, Allford Hall Monaghan and Morris Architects. "But as most of the funds are ongoing as long as the lottery continues, the benefits should trickle down eventually to the small schemes and commissions will be shared out. The potential is there for some fantastic and novel work as long as it is not rushed. Rushed architecture usually turns out to be bad architecture."

With all the excitement over the British Pounds 160 million refurbishment of Covent Garden Royal Opera House, or the Pounds 25 million plan from Will Alsop to build a new ICA gallery out into the Thames on the pillars of the old Blackfriars railway bridge, what do the actual buyers of lottery tickets think? How many regulars at Covent Garden also buy lottery tickets? For that matter, how many of the committee members about to start doling out the money are buyers of lottery tickets?

The requirement by the five lottery funds that applicants supply evidence of local public support and local funding, will to some extent ensure that the public remains in command as both client and consumer. But it will be a shame if, in the end, this tax on the poor is used to immortalise political grantees and famous architects and to bolster the velvet seats of the Covent Garden Royal Opera House.

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**'Juke box fury' *The Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994****The Times and The Sunday Times Compact Disc Edition**

SOURCE: Sunday Times      DATE: 27 March 1994      PAGE: 10/2  
Juke box fury; Pop  
Robert Sandall

ONCE upon a time, there were really only two sorts of pop records, hits and misses. In those days, when the term "hit parade", with its slightly louche suggestion of the beauty contest, was preferred to the scientific, squeaky-clean-sounding "chart", everyone talks about today, you knew what was what. A hit was a record capable of lingering around the parade for a year or more, as Release Me by Engelbert Humperdinck did from January 1967 until the spring of 1968.

A year later, the Rolling Stones's Honky Tonk Women lasted 17 weeks in the chart. Sometimes, as in the case of Acker Bilk's melancholic Stranger On The Shore, which beat all comers for barnacle-like persistence in 1962, a hit could hang on and on without ever reaching the coveted No1 spot. Back then, hits were as recognisable and permanent as the seasons, and the only sure-fire way of ignoring them was to keep your wireless switched off.

Fast forward 30 years: the hit record is going through an identity crisis; the record industry is nervously eyeing its chart and fingering the panic button. Call it what you will, the hit parade was, and still is, supposed to work like a shop window, advertising an artist's music to the world beyond the diehard fan club. That function has virtually seized up. The fact that most of us haven't got a clue what this week's No1 single is called or any of the chart-toppers, probably, since that ineffably silly thing by a pink inflatable called Mr Blobby is only part of the problem.

The more general cause for anxiety is the speed with which hits enter and leave the chart. The average life expectancy of a top 40 single is dropping fast, reaching an all-time low last year of three-and-a-half weeks. An illustration: when Cliff Richard enjoyed his first No1 hit in 1959 with Living Doll, the record stayed in what was then only a top 30 for five months. Compare that with his two most recent numero unos, Mistletoe And Wine from 1988 and Saviour's Day in 1991, neither of which could stand the pace of the modern top 75 for longer than eight weeks.

Of course, much else has changed during Cliff's long tenure at the top. From being the principal focus of an artist's career and serious commercial properties in their own right, recording contracts then seldom even referred to "long players": singles are now designed as trailers for albums. A situation such as the one in early 1967 when, just to keep the hit paraders happy, The Beatles pulled Penny Lane and Strawberry Fields For Ever off the Sgt Pepper LP, is unthinkable today. Ever since 1983, when Michael Jackson released six tracks from Thriller individually, driving sales of the album beyond 25m, the integrity of the single has been shattered.

For a number of years in the late 1980s, sales dipped precipitously, prompting much fashionable speculation about the "death" of the pop single. Like so many other obituaries in this highly volatile area, this one proved to be exaggerated. True, singles sales have generally been peeling backward, but over the past year totals have picked up, rising 8% in 1993. With the growing acceptance of the CD single which now has much more in common with the old four-track EP the slump has bottomed out. In fact, some of the most popular music, notably dance, seems to sell better



on singles than it does on albums.

This revival is doing little to soothe the jangled nerves of the captains of the record industry. A feeling is growing that, thanks to the way the chart now works and, equally importantly, the way it gets manipulated by skilful but short-sighted marketers singles have turned into a Frankenstein's monster. They cost the industry dear: an estimated Pounds 50m a year disappears from the record companies' coffers in the bid to hoist artists into the charts. Once there, though, a "hit" is now more likely to start heading straight back out again than it is to rise, steadily building a successful profile, winning more air-play, and thus attracting new support. The dear old hit parade seems almost to be operating in reverse. The recent Morrissey single, which entered the top 10 in its first week and exited the top 30 in its second, was by no means untypical. At the chart's most discouraging extreme, 99.5% of the tracks that made their debut within the lower reaches of the top 100 last year failed to rise into the top 40.

There are various explanations for this flash-in-the-pan scenario. Some insist that the continuing practice of making singles duplicate album tracks has not deterred all but a rump of obsessive completists. The vast scale of the success of recent hits by Bryan Adams and Whitney Houston partly depended, in this view, on the fact that the songs were initially attached to film soundtracks rather than proper solo albums.

Others see the situation more simply still. "We're releasing too many rotten records by rotten artists," one record company MD asserted last week, pointing to the fact that more than 4,600 singles were issued in 1993 as against about 1,000 a year in the heyday of the black 7-inch in the 1960s. "There are still genuinely popular records being made, and those tracks can still find an audience. Not enough of the singles which make the charts are real hits."

They are in fact the beneficiaries of what is known in the trade as "target marketing": to generate maximum interest, exposure and sales for a new release as soon as it hits the shops, the hope being that the resulting high chart position will garner radio air-play, and hence more sales. Too often nowadays, this wheeze backfires. A typical and quite legal "targeting" ploy offering a single at half the recommended retail price, but only until it charts creates an initial surge in demand among hard-core fans which cannot be sustained. Hence the blink-and-you-missed-it syndrome, and the emergence of an upside-down top 75 which recently contained only three tracks that had improved on the previous week's position.

Much as this may look to outsiders like a case of shooting yourself in the foot and then shooting the messenger who brings back the hospital report, the record industry seems now to have decided that the thing to do is to change the chart itself. Late last year, the industry's trade association, the BPI (British Phonographic Industry), took the contract away from Gallup, which for 10 years had been gathering the sales data from which the charts are compiled, and awarded it to another market research outfit, Millward Brown.

There have been dark mutterings about this. Gallup is not alone in wondering whether the accuracy of its sampling procedures, and the consequent number of suspected chart-rigging practices they uncovered (about two cases a month) might not have irritated an industry desperate to regain control of its chief promotional tool. Some of the independent record shops, which Gallup used to sample far more heavily than Millward Brown now does, have complained in print about an attempt by the big labels



to reduce their influence on the chart on the grounds that small stores are harder to "target market" than large chains. Millward Brown and the BPI dismiss these allegations and claim they will shortly be matching Gallup's sample.

Some sort of change to the chart does seem likely, and so do some strenuous arguments. Ever since it was established in 1952, when a top 12 based on record sales replaced a list of the best-selling sheet music, the main British chart has been compiled on the same principle. The track which notches up the most sales in the preceding seven-day period is No1, and so on down to 30, 40, 50 or, as now, 75. In other countries, notably America, other criteria are also taken into account. The US Billboard chart accepts an "air-play factor" - the number of plays a record receives on radio in determining places in the lower positions. Another sampling procedure gaining support among disgruntled marketeers here is the so-called "rolling chart", which would assess sales over a longer period than the present seven days. By this reckoning, a record which sells 10,000 copies in its first week, 500 in its second, and 200 in its third would have a far rosier future in the chart, with its figures aggregated across a three-week period. The added air-play would not harm its chances, either.

The objections to such innovations are shrill and numerous. The BBC has traditionally rejected any air-play component on the grounds that this would render its DJs and producers susceptible to the blandishments of the pluggers and target marketeers, as has happened in America. The smaller independent record companies, too, feel an air-play chart would simply play into the hands of the big labels, with their greatly increased promotional resources, sweeteners and "strike force" teams.

"The volatility of the UK charts has made them about as credible as the trade balance of a banana republic," a Sony bigwig told the Music Radio Academy here recently. "It makes it very difficult to sell UK music abroad, and increasingly hard to nurture new talent at home, too."

However much we may like to sympathise with chart tradition and indie underdogs, there is some truth in the big companies' argument. Our hit parade has become an unreliable, eccentric creature in its old age. And since it is the Sonys which fund it, to the tune of Pounds 1m a year, change seems likelier than not.



## 'Local theatres face "spiral of decline"' *The Guardian*, 31 May 1995

The Guardian and The Observer on CD-ROM

SOURCE: The Guardian DATE: 31 May 1995 HOM PAGE: 03  
 Local theatres face 'spiral of decline'  
 JAMES MEEBLE AND ROBIN THORNTON REPORT

Crisis in the regions: the majority of playhouses are in deficit, with the shortfall adding up to pounds 5m. National companies may have to bail them out

THE Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company may face grant cuts in order to revive ailing regional theatres and touring companies.

The Arts Council for England yesterday warned that regional drama was at risk of entering a spiral of decline. And it said it was necessary to ask whether the two national drama companies had too big a slice of state subsidies, and might be able to cut their repertoires or do more to share money, actors and production staff with cash-strapped local theatres.

A consultative paper drawn up with the regional arts boards pointed out that provincial theatres were already closing for months. It said that some companies could lose all state grants to ensure the survival of others unless more money was found.

Extra cash was needed for priorities such as new plays and more black and youth theatre.

"It will become inevitable that, in order to fund some companies to a level that enables them to operate effectively, some companies will either have to have their funding removed altogether or receive funding at a level that may mean that they have to radically change and scale down the way they operate."

Three-quarters of the 45 regional theatres in England are thought to be in deficit, adding up to a pounds 6 million shortfall. They include the Liverpool Playhouse, the Bristol Old Vic, the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds, the Crucible at Sheffield, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Salisbury Theatre, and the Redgrave Theatre at Farnham. The National will receive nearly pounds 11.2 million from the council this year. It stages between 15 and 20 new productions a year.

The RSC, which has a grant of nearly pounds 3.5 million, is the largest producer of stage drama in England, with about 15 productions in London and 11 in Stratford-upon-Avon in addition to touring performances.

Its council grant has been frozen for two years and the company faces another standstill next year. It has problems funding its London operation at the Barbican, which it closed for four months four years ago.

The consultation document, pledging "wholehearted support" to the national companies, asked: "How can steps be taken to ensure that their development does not take a disproportionate share of resources that are essential to the health of the theatre community as a whole?"

The RSC responded yesterday: "We are not worried. They are the kind of questions the RSC gets asked all the time."

The council and regional boards distribute nearly pounds 50 million in state grants for drama with local authorities providing a similar amount.

The paper called for more collaborations between theatres and companies in staging fewer, better prepared productions. It highlighted a drain of actors, stage managers, technicians and designers to television and the film companies because of "increasing unsatisfactory working



conditions'' in regional theatres.

The council welcomed the help for building projects from the National Lottery but warned that this must not drain cash from existing theatres.

The paper will go out for two months' consultation before firm proposals on future funding arrangements are prepared.

Nick Jones, the council's drama director, said he could not prejudge the response, adding: ''There is no hidden agenda.''

Lord Bourne, the council's chairman, said: ''Funding should respond to creative developments rather than requiring artists to respond to the funding system.''

The stage union Equity warned that the consultative paper could signal a disaster, with only a small core of theatres producing original work, and a majority merely staging ''bought-in'' material.

A spokesman said: ''If this is carried through, there will be more theatres going dark. Doing away with in-house production will rip out the life of performing in Britain.''

Andrew Hay, artistic director of the Bristol Old Vic, said: ''We wouldn't need this if all theatre was funded properly. VAT off tickets would float British theatre for the next five years.''

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'Music companies hit by £50 million cost of CD probe' The Observer,  
22 May 1994

#### The Guardian and The Observer on CD-ROM

SOURCE: The Observer DATE: 22 May 1994 BUS PAGE: 02  
Music companies hit by pounds 15m cost of CD probe  
EMILY BELL

THE COMPACT disc price war has cost the UK record industry pounds 10 million- pounds 15 million, Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of Thorn EMI, will reveal this week when he presents the company's results for the year to March 1994.

Sir Colin is expected to have harsh words for the MPs and lobbyists who forced a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation, claiming that it has wasted the industry's time and money. The report has yet to be published, but it is widely thought that the MMC will exonerate the record industry from charges of price-fixing.

The investigation was prompted by a report from the Office of Fair Trading, which followed a review of the industry, a year ago by the National Heritage Select Committee. MPs, led by Labour's Gerald Kaufman, gave record companies a drubbing for the high retail price of compact discs in the UK compared to those in the US.

Thorn's pre-tax profits for the year to March are expected to be between pounds 340 million and pounds 360 million, compared with pounds 289.9 million for 1993. EMI's music division is expected to contribute over 60 per cent of profits, through its record label and its HMV record retailing outlet.

EMI, which boasts such money-spinning groups as the Beatles and Pink Floyd as well as Garth Brooks, the world's biggest-selling artist, is developing, with other major record labels, a rival music station to MTV. Reports in the US say EMI has been negotiating with McDonald's to distribute discounted CDs. Thorn's business is becoming increasingly centred on its music publishing activities.

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'Up to your ears in art' *The Sunday Times*, 29 January 1995

## The Times and The Sunday Times Compact Disc Edition

SOURCE: Sunday Times      DATE: 29 January 1995      PAGE: 10/19  
 Up to your ears in art; Galleries  
 Adrienne Connors

Put your headphones on and pick up your wand the way to look at art is interactively, says Adrienne Connors.

How much explanation does the average gallery goer need, or indeed want? For those who have little art history at their fingertips there is, of course, the audioguide. But the problem with audioguides is that they tend to boss you round an exhibition: "Now follow me into the next gallery"; "Look to your right" and you bump into 20 other people doing the same thing.

However, the world of audioguides is changing. Instead of fixed tours the Tate and the National are both introducing interactive guides which allow you to roam at will around their permanent collections and call up commentaries on the paintings or room you want to hear about. The technologies and aims of the systems differ, but they have in common the key words "random access".

TateInform will be launched on Tuesday, for the gallery's latest rehang. The technology, which has been in use at the Louvre since 1993, was provided by Acoustiguide. What you get is a "wand" which looks like an extended mobile telephone, powered by microchips and hanging from a neck strap. The wands 75 will be installed to start with are programmed with "flashcards" (a bit like floppy discs) holding up to four hours of speech. There are introductions to each of the 32 galleries and individual commentaries on three or four key works in each up to eight minutes a gallery. You dial up the number of room or art work and listen; the wand costs Pounds 2 to hire (Pounds 1.50 for concessions).

Four hours may not sound a lot to cover the whole of the Tate's British and modern collections (another four-hour flashcard covering the Turner Bequest is planned for mid-February), but the Tate insists it suits its purposes.

The National Gallery, on the other hand, is planning to cover every painting on the main floor more than 1,000 in what will be "an audio-encyclopedia of the museum", according to Iain Burton, managing director of Arts Communication and Technology, the company providing the hardware. The Gallery Guide, 500 of which will be in place this summer, is essentially a portable CD-Rom player with headphones; as with the Tate's system you key in the number of the appropriate gallery or painting to hear the commentary. There will be about 35 hours of this in total, with individual entries of between one and three minutes. For this you pay a hire charge of Pounds 3 (Pounds 2 for concessions).

Both galleries say that these new systems fill a need. So who are they for? "One of the things we hope the new system will do is perhaps attract a wider audience," says Simon Wilson, curator of interpretation at the Tate. "It is part of a strategy to make the Tate more accessible."

Michael Wilson, head of exhibitions and display at the National, says: "We're not in the business of turning everybody into art historians." But aren't they, well, a little naff? "I'm sure there will be snobbery; that to be seen with this sort of thing means that you don't know. But the



commentaries have helped me see things I've never seen before.''

So what can this mythical visitor expect from the commentaries?

At the Tate the scripts started with the curators, who were taken into the gallery and asked to chat. These 'conversations' became the basis for the tapes.

The commentary to the Pop and Minimal Art gallery does, indeed, begin with a very chatty, but very clear, explanation of the two schools 'both groups thought the abstract impressionists looked hopelessly uncool' followed by a discussion of *Five Ponds*. For *A Bigger Splash* the laconic voice of David Hockney explains how he moved to California on a 'hunch' and found swimming pools everywhere: 'I remember they weren't heated when I was first there, but I still went in it the idea of being able to swim in January was very appealing.' Yes, he does also say some interesting things about the surface of water and the application of paint, but this is as much about entertainment as education.

At the National a team of 20 writers made up of the gallery's own lecturers and freelances prepared the scripts. 'The intention has been to make them easily understandable by a complete beginner,' says Michael Wilson. 'The emphasis has been on helping people to look harder and better trying to help them make their own value judgments.'

The sample transcripts of the commentaries I saw seemed models of compression and with a good sense of the sort of detail an amateur might enjoy. Any unpractised viewer of *The Graham Children* by Hogarth would benefit from learning that Thomas died before the picture was finished, and that the work reflects that. But, what are these phrases 'heavy-handed references' and 'over-egg the cake'? They sound suspiciously like value judgments.

Interactive guides seem to have a firm place in the future of galleries. As Simon Wilson says: 'This is only a beginning.' Both the Tate and the National, if their experiments are successful, may go on to introduce special tours, for example for children or on a type of painting such as the portrait, and to add foreign-language versions. Inevitably there will be voices that say this is part of a fast-forward culture, in which people are fed easy-to-digest soundbites. I just hope that people do, from time to time, take off their headphones and switch off their wands to talk to each other.

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## WH Smith plans to form biggest UK music chain; Virgin Retail

*The Times*, 3 March 1994

### The Times and The Sunday Times Compact Disc Edition

SOURCE: The Times      DATE: 03 March 1994      PAGE: 30  
WH Smith plans to form biggest UK music chain; Virgin Retail  
Susan Gilchrist

WH SMITH yesterday confirmed that it plans to merge its Our Price record chain with Virgin Retail, part of Richard Branson's empire, to create Britain's biggest music retailer, with almost a third of the Pounds 1.3 billion market.

The deal, which will bring together Our Price's 325 stores and the 24 Virgin Megastores under a single integrated management, will put the enlarged venture well ahead of its competitors. Kingfisher's Woolworths and HMV each have about 15 per cent of the music retailing market.

No cash will change hands but WH Smith, which already owns 50 per cent of Virgin Retail, will see its share of the venture increase to 75 per cent. The enlarged operation will be headed by Simon Burke, the current managing director of Virgin Retail in Britain and Ireland.

Richard Handover, managing director of Our Price since 1989, will move to another senior management position within WH Smith. The remaining directors will be Peter Troughton, managing director of British retailing at WH Smith, who will chair the board, and Trevor Abbott, managing director of Virgin Retail throughout Europe. Richard Branson, whose Virgin empire started out from a record shop in London's Oxford Street in 1970, will become president of the joint venture.

Sales of the two chains are expected to exceed Pounds 350 million in the current year. Together with music sales through WH Smith's own newsagents stores, this will give the group just under 30 per cent of the market and is therefore subject to clearance by the Office of Fair Trading. A spokesman for WH Smith was confident that there would be no referral to the Monopolies Commission. "There was no referral following the original joint venture and this is only an extension of that."

Both sides believe the two brands are complementary and insist that they will continue to have separate identities on the high street. The Virgin Megastores compete with HMV in large catchment areas; they sell a wide range of home entertainment, including videos and computer games, as well as music. The Our Price stores predominantly sell music in small to medium-sized catchment areas. Further expansion of the megastores is planned, with the addition of a further ten or more outlets in the next two years. The enlarged operation will also aim to develop the Virgin brand in a new form in middle-sized catchment areas.

Few redundancies, if any, are expected from the merger. A WH Smith spokesman said: "The deal is not about cost saving but about brand development." However, savings are expected through the merging of the two management structures and increased buying power.

The two sides forged the partnership in September 1991, though trading links date back to 1988, when WH Smith bought about 70 small record stores from Virgin. The latter then went on to concentrate on developing its Megastore format.



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11 - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (1)

Date (1994)	Venue	Awarding Body	Time
14 April	THOMAS DANBY COLLEGE	BTEC	12.30
16 April	SHELLEY HIGH SCHOOL	C&G	13.00
17 April	BEVERLEY COLLEGE OF FE	BTEC	9.00
22 April	BRADFORD & ILKLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	C&G	11.00
25 April	HULL COLLEGE	RSA	9.00
25 April	GREENHEAD COLLEGE	RSA	13.15
29 April	OULDER HILL COMMUNITY SCHOOL, ROCHDALE	BTEC	9.30



**12a - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/FORMAT (1)**  
**GNVQ COORDINATORS**

My name is Vikki Smith, I am a research student at the University of Huddersfield. I am investigating GNVQ courses. I am expecting the interview to last about half an hour and everything discussed here will be totally confidential.

Establishment	School Sixth Form	FE College
Awarding body	BTEC	RSA C&G

- 1 What aims and objectives do you think GNVQs achieve?
- 2 What currency do you think GNVQs will have in Higher Education and in the employment, compared to GCSEs / A-Levels?
- 3 The press have directed much attention to GNVQs attracting lower ability students. What is your response to this?
- 4 GNVQs were designed in an attempt to bridge the academic/vocational divide. How, if at all, do you think this has been achieved?
- 5 Do you think GNVQs provide a 'general education'? If so, how?
- 6 Do you think that the range available in GNVQs promotes breadth in terms of a general education?
- 7 How much tension is there between the depth and breadth of GNVQs?
- 8 To what extent do you think GNVQs offer a liberal education?
- 9 What role do you think 'Core Skills' play in GNVQs?
- 10 Do you think that 'competence' is an either/or matter or are there degrees of 'competence' that ought to be recognised?
- 11 How do you think 'competence' affects the advance towards offering breadth in a general education?
- 12 How are you coping with the increased competition from the likes of School Sixth Forms / Further Education Colleges in offering GNVQ courses?
- 13 Due to the level of resources required to offer GNVQ courses, can you see a two-tier system developing in School Sixth Forms / Further Education Colleges?
- 14 Is there anything else that you would like to add about your GNVQ experiences?

**12b     -     INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/FORMAT (1)**  
**GNVQ STAFF**

My name is Vikki Smith, I am a research student at the University of Huddersfield. I am investigating GNVQ courses. I am expecting the interview to last about half an hour and everything discussed here will be totally confidential.

Establishment	School Sixth Form	FE College
Awarding body	BTEC                  RSA	C&G

- 1        What do you understand to be the GNVQ 'ethos'?
- 2        What changes have had to be made to accommodate GNVQs?
- 3        How has this affected your teaching and learning methods and processes?
- 4        Are the resources available for the adoption of these (new) approaches?
- 5        Are you looking for different criteria, than previously, when marking work? If so, what?
- 6        What do you see as the transferable skills?
- 7        How far do you think underpinning knowledge and understanding is necessary in GNVQs?
- 8        To what degree do you integrate the content of GNVQs? (including Core Skills)
- 9        What role do you think Core Skills play in GNVQs?
- 10       Where do you see the breadth in GNVQs? (Is it in Core Skills, or from other areas?)
- 11       How much tension is there between the depth and breadth of GNVQs?
- 12       To what extent do you think GNVQs offer a liberal education?
- 13       Do you think that GNVQs are equivalent in standard to BTEC First/GCSE or BTEC National/A-Levels?
- 14       How feasible do you think it is to have a qualification which is a preparation for Higher Education and employment?
- 15       Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences of GNVQs?



**12c     -     INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/FORMAT (1)**  
**STUDENTS**

My name is Vikki Smith, I am a research student at the University of Huddersfield. I am investigating GNVQ courses. I am expecting the interview to last about half an hour and everything discussed here will be totally confidential.

Level	Intermediate	Advanced
Establishment	School Sixth Form	FE College
Awarding body	BTEC                  RSA	C&G

- 1        Do you like your course?
- 2        What other courses did you consider?
- 3        Why did you choose this particular course and establishment?
- 4        What do you think is the difference between GNVQs and GCSE/A Levels?
- 5        How do the teaching and learning methods differ from your previous courses?
- 6        What do you think the purpose of Core Skills are?
- 7        How are Core Skills taught? (are they integrated at all?)
- 8        What do you intend to do when you finish this course?
- 9        How well do you think will GNVQ students be able to compete for university places or jobs, compared to GCSE/A-Level students?
- 10       Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**SCHOOLS:-**

**TONG SCHOOL**  
Westgate Hill  
Bradford BD4 6NR  
Tel. No: (01274) 861455

**WHITCLIFFE MOUNT**  
Turnstead Avenue  
Cleckheaton

**BELLE VUE HIGH SCHOOL**  
Thorne Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire BD9 6NA

**BRIGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL**  
The Sixth Form Centre  
Halifax Road  
Brighouse  
West Yorkshire HO6 1AY

**LONGCROFT SCHOOL**  
Molescroft  
Beverley  
East Yorkshire

**OULDER HILL COMMUNITY**  
Hudson's Walk  
Rochdale  
Lancs

**COLLEGES:-**

**BLACKBURN COLLEGE**  
Feilden Street  
Blackburn

**HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE**  
Middleton  
Greater Manchester  
Lancs

**BEVERLEY COLLEGE**  
Gallows Lane  
Beverley  
East Yorkshire

**DEWSBURY COLLEGE**  
Halifax Road  
Dewsbury  
West Yorkshire

**HULL COLLEGE OF F.E**  
Queen's Gardens  
Hull  
East Yorkshire HU1 3DG

**THOMAS DANBY COLLEGE**  
Roundhay Road  
Sheepscar  
Leeds

**ROCKINGHAM COLLEGE**  
Wath-Upon-Deme  
Rotherham S63 6PX



**NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT**  
**GENERAL NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**  
**BUSINESS STUDIES**

*This questionnaire should be completed by those involved with GNVQ Business at Intermediate or Advanced Levels. The aim is to measure the attitudes of people concerned with GNVQs at all levels. Please tick the boxes where appropriate and give comments where invited. The task of completing this questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes.*

**Confidentiality of institutions and individuals will be maintained at all stages.**

- |   |                                                                                  |                              |                          |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Type of establishment                                                            | a) Further Education College | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                                                                  | b) School Sixth Form         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | How long has your institution been running the GNVQ Business Advanced Level?     |                              |                          |
|   | a) This is the first year                                                        |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | b) This is the second year                                                       |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | c) This is the third year                                                        |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | How long has your institution been running the GNVQ Business Intermediate Level? |                              |                          |
|   | a) This is the first year                                                        |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | b) This is the second year                                                       |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | c) This is the third year                                                        |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Are you teaching:                                                                | a) mandatory units only      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                                                                  | b) Core Skills units only    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                                                                  | c) both of the above         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                                                                  | d) none of the above         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Are you the GNVQ coordinator for GNVQ Business ?                                 |                              |                          |
|   | a) Intermediate Level only                                                       |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | b) Advanced Level only                                                           |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | c) both of the above                                                             |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | d) none of the above                                                             |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Tick the box which most accurately represents your feelings with regard to the following statements

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

### GNVQS & A LEVELS

- |    |                                                                                              |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6  | The national qualification of GNVQs does not mean that a national standard has been attained | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | GNVQs provide an alternative to A Levels which has credibility and status                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | GNVQs provide the 'middle band' of students with a good course                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | GNVQs are academically equal to A Levels                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | GNVQs attract only those students who are not suited to A Levels                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | A Level students would find an Advanced GNVQ and A Level equally demanding                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | GNVQ Intermediate is easier than GCSEs                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | GNVQ Advanced is easier than A Levels                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | GNVQs are successful in bridging the academic/vocational divide                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | GNVQs are for students of lower ability than those pursuing A Levels                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Good GCSE students will still automatically go on to A Levels                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### CORE SKILLS

- |    |                                                                                                                   |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17 | Core Skills are the transferable element of a GNVQ                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | Core Skills help the student to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | The purpose of Core Skills is unclear to me                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 | Core Skills provide breadth to a vocationally specific area                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 | The number of Core Skills that are mandatory should be increased so that a more general education can be achieved | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### COMPETENCE

- |    |                                                                               |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 22 | Competence means having enough <del>skills</del> suitable for a given purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|



		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
23	Competence means having enough <u>skills and knowledge</u> suitable for a given purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Underpinning knowledge and understanding is taken a stage further in GNVQs than A Levels, as it goes on to be applied to a vocational area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Underpinning knowledge and understanding is crucial to GNVQs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	The external tests are about facts and do not encourage the development underpinning knowledge and understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Competence detracts from depth as it can be covered in a purely superficial way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	You can do something even if you do not understand it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	GNVQ Business students have to be competent in a variety of situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### BREADTH IN EDUCATION

30	Depth cannot be recognised in GNVQs due to the prescriptive nature of the Performance Criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	Depth and understanding do not have to be attained as they is not specified in a GNVQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	The range in a GNVQ ensure that a general education is achieved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33	The number of Performance Criteria in a GNVQ generates breadth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34	A general education means that a wide range of subject matter is covered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35	A general education aims to develop an inquiring mind in the student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36	A liberal education broadens the mind and therefore frees the person from narrow thought	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37	The wide range of subjects on a GNVQ promotes a broad, general education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38	GNVQs, being vocational, prepare individuals for earning a living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
39	GNVQs promote free thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40	GNVQs are more general than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41	GNVQs are concerned with a vocationally specific area and cannot therefore be broad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42	Breadth is developed more in GNVQs than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43	There is no breadth in GNVQs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44	The vocational nature of GNVQs means that a liberal education cannot be achieved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45	Breadth in GNVQs comes at the expense of depth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46	GNVQs do not teach students to think for themselves in any great way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47	Students are entitled to a liberal education throughout their studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49	A liberal education post-16 is necessary to prepare individuals for life in the 21st century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49	A general education is a more appropriate preparation for life in the 21st century than a liberal education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### TEACHING & LEARNING METHODS

50	Students would learn more if there were more lectures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51	Lectures would be more interesting for the students than a student centred approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52	The level of responsibility on the students studying on a GNVQ is too much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53	Assessment using an evidence gathering based activity followed by an external memory based test is a contradiction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54	When grading work there is a focus on the methodology and not on the content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- 55 Core Skills should include: a) a mandatory foreign language ☐  
b) personal interest subjects ☐  
c) both of the above ☐  
d) no other subjects ☐
- 56 Separate classes should be provided for GNVQ students in: ☐  
a) all Core Skills ☐  
b) communication, numeracy & I.T only ☐  
c) none of the Core Skills ☐
- 57 The student centred approach of GNVQs develops students: ☐  
a) confidence ☐  
b) confidence & dependence ☐  
c) confidence, dependence & responsibility ☐  
d) none of the above ☐
- 58 The student centred approach helps maintain: a) interest ☐  
b) motivation ☐  
c) both of the above ☐  
d) none of the above ☐
- 59 Facts have to be analysed by students in: a) GCSEs & A Levels ☐  
b) GNVQs ☐  
c) both of the above ☐  
d) none of the above ☐
- 60 A Levels offer a: a) liberal education ☐  
b) general education ☐  
c) both of the above ☐  
d) none of the above ☐
- 61 GNVQs offer a: a) liberal education ☐  
b) general education ☐  
c) both of the above ☐  
d) none of the above ☐

***Thank you for your participation in this project***

# STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Ref: ☐☐☐☐☐

## NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT GENERAL NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS BUSINESS STUDIES

*If you are a student on a GNVQ Business course, at Advanced or Intermediate Level, please complete this questionnaire. The aim is to measure the attitudes of students concerned with the GNVQ programme. The task of completing this questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes. Please tick the boxes where appropriate.*

**Your responses will be completely confidential.**

- |   |                                       |                              |                          |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Where are you studying?               | a) Further Education College | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                       | b) School Sixth Form         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | What level of GNVQ course are you on? | a) Advanced first year       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                       | b) Advanced second year      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                       | c) Intermediate              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Are you                               | a) Male?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                       | b) Female?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Are you aged                          | a) 16 - 19?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                                       | b) 20 plus?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |



How much do you agree with the following statements?

Tick the most appropriate box for each one

Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Don't Know

### CORE SKILLS

- |   |                                                                                        |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5 | Core Skills help students to cope with the academic side of a GNVQ                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | The purpose of Core Skills is not clear to me                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | Core Skills develop students in areas that are necessary for university and employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | Core Skills help to develop study skills                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | I have to take too much responsibility for the development of my own Core Skills       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### COMPETENCE

- |    |                                                                                        |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10 | Competence means having enough <u>skills</u> suitable for the given purpose            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | Competence means having enough <u>skill and knowledge</u> suitable for a given purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | GNVQ students are competent in a wide range of tasks and subjects                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | GNVQs restricts the students to being competent in a vocational area                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | Students studying for a GNVQ can pinpoint exactly what they are able to do             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | You can do something even if you do not understand it                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | GNVQ Business students are competent in a variety of situations                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### BREADTH IN EDUCATION

- |    |                                                                                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17 | A general education means that a wide range of subject matter is covered                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | A general education aims to develop an inquiring mind in the student                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | A liberal education broadens the mind and therefore frees the person from narrow thought | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 | The wide range of subjects on a GNVQ promotes a broad, general education                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 | GNVQs, being vocational, prepare individuals for earning a living                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22 | GNVQs promote free thinking                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
23	GNVQs are more general than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	GNVQs are concerned with one vocational area and cannot therefore be broad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Breadth is developed more in GNVQs than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	GNVQs need to include a wider range of subjects in each vocational area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	GNVQs offer too many options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	The amount of time spent per week studying in class for a GNVQ should be increased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	More class time for a GNVQ would allow me to develop an understanding in a greater variety of topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### TEACHING & LEARNING METHODS

30	I would learn more if there were more lectures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	Lectures would be more interesting than the student centred approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	The student centred approach of GNVQs develops my:					
	a) confidence					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) confidence & dependence					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) confidence, dependence & responsibility					<input type="checkbox"/>
	d) none of the above					<input type="checkbox"/>
33	The student centred approach help to maintain my:					
	a) interest					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) motivation					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) both of the above					<input type="checkbox"/>
	d) none of the above					<input type="checkbox"/>
34	Separate classes should be provided for GNVQ students in:					
	a) all Core Skills					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) communication, numeracy & I.T only					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) none of the Core Skills					<input type="checkbox"/>



- 35 Core Skills should include:
- a) a mandatory foreign language ☐
  - b) personal interest subjects ☐
  - c) both of the above ☐
  - d) no other subjects ☐
- 36 Facts have to be analysed by students in:
- a) GCSEs & A Levels ☐
  - b) GNVQs ☐
  - c) both of the above ☐
  - d) none of the above ☐
- 37 A Levels offer a:
- a) liberal education ☐
  - b) general education ☐
  - c) both of the above ☐
  - d) none of the above ☐
- 38 GNVQs offer a:
- a) liberal education ☐
  - b) general education ☐
  - c) all of the above ☐
  - d) none of the above ☐

*Students studying at Advanced Level please go to question number 51*

*Students studying at Intermediate Level only to fill in this next section*

Strongly  
Agree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly  
Disagree  
Don't  
Know

- 39 GNVQs are easier than GCSEs ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- 40 GCSEs are a better preparation for further education than GNVQs ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- 41 GNVQs are a better preparation for employment than GCSEs ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- 42 The level of responsibility on the students studying on a GNVQ is too much ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- 43 The degree of formal lectures on a GNVQ is far less than on a GCSE programme ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- 44 Upon completion of this course, what do you intend to do?
- a) The Advanced Level GNVQ ☐
  - b) Other Further Education study ☐
  - c) Employment ☐
  - d) Further Education if there are no jobs ☐
  - e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 45 How many GCSEs do you currently have?
- a) 0-2 ☐
  - b) 3 ☐
  - c) 4+ ☐
- 46 How many of these are at grades A - C?
- a) 0-2 ☐
  - b) 3 ☐
  - c) 4+ ☐
- 47 Are you studying additional GCSEs now?
- a) Yes ☐
  - b) No ☐
- 48 If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
- 49 Are you studying any Additional units as part of your GNVQ course?
- a) Yes ☐
  - b) No ☐
- 50 If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

***Intermediate Level students should finish here. Thank you for your participation in this project***



Students studying at Advanced Level only to fill in this next section

Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Don't Know

51	GNVQs are easier than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52	A Levels are a better preparation for university than GNVQs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53	GNVQs are a better preparation for employment than A Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54	The level of responsibility on the students studying on a GNVQ is too much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55	The degree of formal input on a GNVQ is far less than an A Level programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
56	Upon completion of this course, what do you intend to do?					
	a) Higher Education					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) Employment					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) Higher Education if there are no jobs					<input type="checkbox"/>
	d) Other, please specify _____					
57	How many GCSEs do you currently have?					<input type="checkbox"/>
	a) 0-2					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) 3					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) 4+					<input type="checkbox"/>
58	How many of these are at grades A - C?					<input type="checkbox"/>
	a) 0-2					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) 3					<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) 4+					<input type="checkbox"/>
59	Are you studying for any A Levels now alongside your GNVQ course?					<input type="checkbox"/>
	a) Yes					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) No					<input type="checkbox"/>
60	If yes, how many?					_____
61	Are you studying for any Additional units as part of your GNVQ course?					<input type="checkbox"/>
	a) Yes					<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) No					<input type="checkbox"/>
62	If yes, how many?					_____

Thank you for your participation in this project

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**DEBBIE THORNTON**  
Assistant Principal (Curriculum)  
York College  
Tadcaster Road  
York YO2 1UA

Tel: 01904 704141



17 - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (2)

**ALISON MATTHEWS**  
NCVQ  
222 Euston Road  
London

Tel: 0171 728 1908

**Thurs. 23 November 1995**  
**10:30 - 11:30 am**

**JOHN ANKERS**  
Training Manager  
ZENECA  
Leeds Road  
Huddersfield

Tel: 433738

**Friday 24 November 1995**  
**10:00 - 11:00 am**

**DEBBIE THORNTON**  
Assistant Principal (Curriculum)  
York College  
Tadcaster Road  
York YO2 1UA

Tel: 01904 704141

**Wed 29 November 1995**  
**2:00 - 3:00 pm**

**CHAHID FOURALI**  
CGLI  
Senior Research Officer  
Research Department  
1 Giltspur Street  
London EC1A 9DD

Tel: 0171 2942468 ext 2620

**Friday 1 December 1995**  
**4:30 - 5:30 pm**

**ALAN McAVAN**  
Halifax Building Society  
Permanent Buildings  
Commercial Street  
Halifax

Tel: 01422 333333 ext 32389

**Tuesday 5 December 1995**  
**2:30 - 3:30 pm**

**AIDEN PETTITT**  
Further Education Development Agency  
FEDA  
Citadel Place  
Tinworth Street  
Vauxhall  
London SE11 5EH

Tel: 0171 962 1280

**Friday 8 December 1995**  
**11:00 - 12:00 noon**

**TERRY HYLAND**  
Department of Continuing Education  
University of Warwick  
Coventry CV4 7AL

Tel: 0120 352 3523

**Monday 11 December 1995**  
**2:00 - 3:00 pm**

A prime concern of the research project is GNVQs and their place in the 16-19 education sector. Recognising that GNVQs are intrinsically connected to vocational education, my aim is to explore the meanings of other possible forms of education provision. The research so far has given a strong indication that confusion abounds over what liberal and general education are and whether they are in fact different or synonymous. This is one such problem I endeavour to clarify. A further point of interest is whether GNVQs, being vocational, can then also offer a general or a liberal education and whether we should want them to.

Once this stage of the research has been completed, I will forward a copy of the findings to you.

I would just like to clarify that everything discussed here is confidential. If everything is clear, we can begin.

#### Questions to be addressed in the interviews:-

- 1 How would you characterise liberal education?
- 2 How would you characterise general education?

#### PROMPT SHEET

- 3 You have highlighted some similarities, what do you see as the main differences between the two?
- 4 Which of these characteristics do you think should be present in education for 16-19 year olds?
- 5 Which, if any, of these qualities do you think are evident in a GNVQ?
- 6 What else do you think should be present in a GNVQ?
- 7 In your opinion, do GNVQs provide a liberal or a general education?
- 8 Do you think that a liberal or a general education is the way forward for education for 16-19 year olds? (Why?)
- 9 Do you think that GNVQs should offer a liberal/general education? (Follow Q8)
- 10 What alterations would you make to GNVQs to make them more liberal/general?
- 11 Do you think that the vocational nature of GNVQs means that they are not compatible with liberal and general education?
- 12 Does liberal education have any place in education for 16-19 year olds? (Back-up question)
- 13 Is there anything else that you would like to add?



Please Indicate Which of the Following you Consider to Relate to Liberal  
and/or General Education:-

MORAL CONSCIENCE	AESTHETICS
EMANCIPATORY	CREATIVITY
VALUES	BELIEFS
CULTURAL INHERITANCE	SELF AWARENESS
SOCIAL CRITIQUE	SOCIAL AWARENESS
POLITICAL AWARENESS	ECONOMIC AWARENESS
TEAM WORK	SPECIALISATION
CULTIVATION OF THE INTELLECT	INTELLECTUAL EXCELLENCE
PURE KNOWLEDGE	APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE
SEPARATE KNOWLEDGE FROM OPINION	UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
BREADTH IN EDUCATION	DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING
CRITICAL ANALYSIS	DATA ANALYSIS
INDEPENDENT THINKING	DEVELOPING AN INQUIRING MIND
INFORMED JUDGMENTS	REFLECTION

**Moral Conscience**

Four of the seven (56%) respondents attributed 'moral conscience' to liberal education. A further respondent thought that it was a part of both liberal and general education, thus 70% related moral conscience to liberal education whilst only 14% equated it with general education and qualified this by stating that it was perhaps to a lesser degree. Not a single respondent thought that it was an element of general education only.

**Aesthetics**

Aesthetics was seen to be a part of liberal education by three (42%) of the participants. A further respondent indicated that it was part of both liberal and general education (to a lesser degree), making 56% selecting the liberal education variable and 14% the general education variable. Three participants chose not to place it in either category.

**Emancipatory**

Liberal education was seen as emancipatory by five of the seven participants, with a further respondent indicating that it was an element of both liberal and general education; thus 84% related 'emancipatory' with liberal education.

**Creativity**

Creativity was a complex issue. The point that 'creativity' could actually depend on the topic of study was raised frequently. Subsequently two of the respondents said that it was part of both liberal and general education - if to a lesser degree, whilst further responses registered one each for liberal and general education.

**Values**

The question of whether education aims to transmit 'values' showed that liberal education has such an aim, with 84% (four out of seven) registering this view. The ability of general education to transmit 'values' was slightly lower with 42% holding the opinion that 'values' were a part of general education. Of the results shown above, two of the respondents (28%) thought that values were part of both liberal and general education.

**Beliefs**

The findings show that liberal education only was seen to foster 'beliefs' by 42% of the cohort whilst 14% suggested general education only. A further respondent thought that it was intrinsic to both liberal and general education: five respondents then equated 'beliefs' to liberal education over general education. Two respondents did not place 'beliefs' in either of the two categories.

**Cultural Inheritance**

Liberal education was seen to promote cultural inheritance by 84% of the participants. Of this, 14% also saw it as part of general education.

**Self Awareness**

The findings show that 42% of the respondents thought that self awareness was part



of both liberal (but to a lesser degree) and general education. However, a further 28% then selected liberal education only whereas only 14% selected the general education only variable.

### **Social Critique**

Three of the seven respondents (42%) related 'social critique' with liberal education only whilst a further 28% thought it was part of both liberal and general education - although to a greater degree in liberal education. A further 14% selected the general education only variable. Thus social critique was seen as an essential element of liberal education by five of the participants whilst only three equated it to general education, and less strongly.

### **Social Awareness**

Does education work towards making the individual socially aware? General education was seen as promoting social awareness to a greater number than liberal education: 28% selected general education only, compared to 14% selecting liberal education only. A further 42% chose both liberal and general education but with liberal education holding it as a stronger issue.

### **Political Awareness**

Political awareness was seen to relate to liberal education only by 42% of the participants. A further 28% selected both liberal and general education whilst 14% selected the general education only option. Subsequently, political awareness was seen to be related to and an essential part of liberal education by five of the seven respondents, but only three of the seven saw as part of general education.

### **Economic Awareness**

General education was thought to promote economic awareness by 56% of the cohort. Only 14% thought that it had any part in liberal education. Two respondents chose not to place it any category.

### **Team Work**

Team work was seen as an essential element of general education by 70% of the cohort, of which 14% thought that it was also a part of liberal education. None of the respondents thought that team work was a part of liberal education only.

### **Specialisation**

Four (56%) of the participants chose not to relate specialisation to either liberal or general education. Of the remainder, 28% indicated that it was part of general education whilst 14% were of the belief that specialisation was a part of liberal education.

### **Cultivation of the Intellect**

Liberal education was seen as promoting the cultivation of the intellect by 84% of the respondents. Of this 28% thought that it was also promoted in general education. No-one thought that it was promoted in general education only.

### **Intellectual Excellence**

When asked if intellectual excellence was an aim in liberal or general education 42% did not respond conclusively, 28% thought that it was a part of both liberal and general education being a stronger element of general education. A further 14% selected liberal education only and general education only respectively. Thus a difference of opinion is registered whereby three respondents equally related intellectual excellence to liberal and general education but evident to a lesser degree in liberal education.

### **Pure Knowledge**

A division over whether pure knowledge was intrinsic to liberal and/or general education exists with 28% each selected in the liberal education only variable and the general education only variable. However, 42% chose not to place it in either of the categories.

### **Application of Knowledge**

Do either liberal or general education require that the knowledge that is learnt also be applied? The general opinion was that general education did require knowledge to be applied with 84% holding this belief. Of this 28% also thought that liberal education required knowledge to be applied.

### **Separate Knowledge from Opinion**

Was an individual required to separate knowledge from opinion in liberal education? Two (28%) of the participant held the opinion that liberal education did hold such a requirement. Equally 28% held the same belief of general education. A further 14% thought that both modes of education required that knowledge be separated from opinion.

### **Underpinning Knowledge and Understanding**

Underpinning knowledge and understanding has become something of a buzz word in recent years. Does it, however, have any place in liberal or general education? The majority at 84% thought that underpinning knowledge and understanding was indeed a part of general education. Of this majority 28% also thought that it was stronger a part of liberal education than general education.

### **Breadth in Education**

Breadth in education was seen as an essential element of general education by six of the seven respondents (84%), 14% also saw it as part of liberal education. By comparison only 14% saw it as part of liberal education only showing that two out of the seven participants related breadth in education to liberal education.

### **Depth of Understanding**

Is depth of understanding seen as a necessity in liberal education? Surprisingly, it would appear not. Only 14% thought that it was a part of both liberal and general education whilst 42% thought that it was a part of general education only. A further 42% chose not to place depth of understanding in either of the categories.

### **Critical Analysis**

Critical analysis was seen as part of both liberal and general education by 56% of the



cohort. A further 14% and 28% also registered the opinion that it was a part of general education only and liberal education only respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was not placed in either liberal or general education by 42% of the respondents. A further 56%, however, did indicate that data analysis was a part of general education of which 14% also saw it as being part of liberal education.

### **Independent Thinking**

Liberal education was seen to encourage independent thinking by 56% of the respondents. Of this, half (28%) also thought it was a part of general education and a further 14% thought that it was a part of general education only.

### **Developing an Inquiring Mind**

The ability of different modes of education to develop an inquiring mind brought a mixed response. Whilst 42% thought that a general education only had such an ability only 28% thought the same was true of liberal education only. However the remaining 28% thought that it was a part of both liberal and general education but contrary to the above, to a greater degree in liberal education. Subsequently, four of the seven respondents strongly believed that developing an inquiring mind was an aim of liberal education, whereas of the five who related developing an inquiring mind to general education two were less convinced.

### **Informed Judgements**

General education was seen to encourage informed judgments by 70% of the cohort. Of this 42% thought that liberal education also encouraged such traits but to a lesser degree and a further 14% thought that liberal education alone encouraged such a quality.

### **Reflection**

Four (56%) of the participants were of the belief that liberal education encouraged reflection. Of this group, 42% also saw it as a part of general education if to a lesser degree. However a further 42% saw reflection as something that was encouraged in general education only.

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EXCLUDED  
UNDER  
INSTRUCTION  
FROM  
UNIVERSITY**



- 1 Other than the subjects or units, what else do you think the students learn on a GNVQ programme?
- 2 Do you think that the course prepares students for the real world? How so?
- 3 Do you think the students are aware of what is happening in the world? How?
- 4 What do you think the students learn about dealing with other people?
- 5 As well as looking at business subjects, are students aware of what is considered to be acceptable behaviour in a business setting? Do you have an example?
- 6 And in a social setting?
- 7 Do you think there is a broad enough range of subjects?
- 8 Does the course focus too much on business? Would you like other aspects to be included as well? Such as?
- 9 Are there any other subjects at all that you feel the students would benefit from their inclusion in the course?
- 10 Does the course allow students to take the initiative in their work? Can you give me an example?
- 11 Does the course allow creativity in any way? Can you give me an example?
- 12 Are students given the opportunity to develop information in their own way? How so?
- 13 Would you prefer more control to be given to individual students? In what way? Why?
- 14 How do the students decide if the information they are gathering is relevant or not?
- 15 Do students have to apply the basics of business theory to real situations? Can you give me an example?
- 16 Do you consider the course intellectually stimulating and challenging for the students? How so?

## 24 - GRADING SHEET

Please grade each of the following activities in terms of how often you use  
such methods in your GNVQ class time.

**Code: 1 Never    2 Sometimes    3 Frequently    4 Fairly Often    5 Regularly**

Individual Work	1	2	3	4	5
Group Work	1	2	3	4	5
Case Studies	1	2	3	4	5
Role Plays	1	2	3	4	5
Oral Presentations	1	2	3	4	5
Exhibitions / Displays	1	2	3	4	5
Project Work	1	2	3	4	5
Assignment Work	1	2	3	4	5
Action Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Group Discussions, ie: 'brainstorming'	1	2	3	4	5
Work Experience Placements	1	2	3	4	5
Drawing on Personal Experiences	1	2	3	4	5
Formal Lectures	1	2	3	4	5
Report Writing	1	2	3	4	5
Group Debates	1	2	3	4	5
Interdisciplinary Approach	1	2	3	4	5
Student Centred Approach	1	2	3	4	5
Self-development	1	2	3	4	5
Self-management and Organisation	1	2	3	4	5
Information Seeking and Analysis	1	2	3	4	5
Practical Skills	1	2	3	4	5
Developing Moral Attributes	1	2	3	4	5
Promoting Interactive and Social Skills	1	2	3	4	5



25 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/FORMAT(3) - STUDENTS

- 1 Can you tell me about something that you like or enjoy about your course?
- 2 How would you describe a typical good day at school / college?
- 3 What else have you learnt other than the units or subjects that you have studied?
- 4 Do you think that your course has, or will, prepare you for the real world? How?
- 5 Do you think you are aware of what is happening in the world? How so?
- 6 What have you learnt about dealing with other people?
- 7 As well as looking at business subjects, have you learnt anything about what is considered as acceptable behaviour in a business setting? Do you have an example?
- 8 And in a social setting?
- 9 Do you think you study a broad enough range of subjects?
- 10 Does the course focus too much on business? Would you like other aspects to be included as well? Such as?
- 11 Are there any other subjects at all that you feel you would benefit from their inclusion in the course?
- 12 Has your course allowed you to take the initiative in your work? How?
- 13 Does your course allow you to be creative in any way? Can you give me an example?
- 14 Are you given the opportunity to develop information in your own way? How?
- 15 Would you prefer more control over your work? In what way? Why?
- 16 How do you decide if the information you are gathering is relevant or not?
- 17 Do you have to apply the basics of business theory to real situations? In what way?
- 18 Do you find the course intellectually stimulating and challenging? How so?
- 19 What teaching methods have you experienced? Which of these did you like best? Why? (Was it because of the teacher?)
- 20 Can you tell me what it is you like about being at school / college and about your course in particular?

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